# ART PANORAMA OF TAMILS

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*Authors*

**Dr. AVVAI. NATARAJAN**

**NATANA. KASINATHAN**

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# Foreword

Dr. Avvai Natarajan and Thiru. Natana. Kasinathan have been contributing a number of learned papers to numerous journals and seminars on a veriety of subjects like art, epigraphy, numismatics and history pertaining to Tamilnadu. This volume contains a collection of 18 papers which are very interesting and show their deep studies on a variety of themes. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that they have made an intensive study of the Tamil inscriptions and unravalled many less known and even unknown acts. In the first three papers they have brought to light the rich legacy of Tamilnadu in the field of arts and crafts and also the many unknown artists and artisans. The papers on the paintings of Tamilnadu are equally interesting wherein they have described the recently discovered Pre-historic paintings of Tamilnadu besides documenting the Nayak Paintings in Tiruchi District and Krishnapuram in Tirunelveli District. Their contributions on the Numismatic section have thrown new light on the use of currency under the Pallavas. The discovery of a coin namely Kandagopalan Madai and identification of it as belonging to the Telugu chola chieftain Kandagopalan is quite important as also the identification of the Virachampan kuligai with the Sambuvaraya chieftain of Padaividu rajya. It will be a fruitful task for the numismatists to pursue this line of research and try and correlate the coin finds with the coin names that occur in the inscriptions.

In the papers pertainting to Epigraphy, Thiru. Natana Kasinathan has given his analysis of the Tamil Brahmi inscriptions and holds the view that they were coeval with the Asokan Brahmi. In his interesting paper on the Kalabhras he takes stock of the various theories on this problem and concludes that they were patrons of Jainism and Buddhism in the earlier period and later they patronised Saivism. In the paper of Mahasivaratri he has clearly shown the great antiquity of the festival and cited appropriate epigraphical and literary references. He has also studied the paintings on the Mahasivarathri theme found in the Tirumangaikudi temple near Kumbakonam.

I have no doubt that the students and scholars in the field of Tamil History, art and culture will enjoy reading these papers as they contain valuable information culled out from inscriptions, coins, copper plates, paintings and monuments.

I wish both Dr. Avvai. Natarajan and Thiru. Natana. Kasinathan continue their research studies and contribute more and more such papers.

**K. V. RAMAN**

1st November, 1992

Professor and Head,
Department of Ancient History and Archaeology,
University of Madras, Madras.

# Preface

This book "Art Panorama of Tamils" is a collection of articles written by us on various occasions, some of which have been presented in seminars and published in the collection of seminar papers. We are grateful to those organisations which published our papers.

The first and second articles were prepared for presentation in the seminar of V international Tamil studies held at Madurai in the year 1981, but an abridged version of the article on artisans alone was published.

The following are the other articles presented in various seminars.

1. Pre Historic Paintings: 45th Indian History Congress held at Annamalai University, Chidambaram.
2. Exquisite Panel sculptures: 51st Indian History Congress held at Calcutta, 1990.
3. Andippatti coin-A Reappraisal: 1st Seminar of the Tamilnadu Numismatics Society held at Madras.
4. Pallava currency as gleaned from inscriptions: IIIrd Seminar of the Tamilnadu Numismatics Society held at Madras.
5. Kandagopalan Madai: IVth Seminar of the Tamilnadu Numismatics Society held at Madras.
6. Virachampan Kuligai: IInd Seminar of the Tamilnadu Numismatics Society held at Madras.
7. Metal used as medium of writing: Seminar on Metallurgy held at Madras.
8. Tirunchengodu copper plate grants a study: South Indian History Congress held at Madras.
9. Place Names as gleaned from Hero stone inscriptions: Annual Seminar of the Place Name society of India, held at Anantapur, A. P.
10. Mahasivaratri: Seminar on Siva conducted by C. P. R. Cultural Institute, Madras.

We are deeply beholden to the organisations that had granted permission for publishing these papers presented in the seminars conducted by them. The articles of "Krishnapuram Treasure house of Nayak art"

and "Late Nayak paintings in Trichy district" are published in Nunkalai, while the article entitled 'Education in Ancient Tamilnadu' in Tamilarasu. We owe the debt of gratitude to the departments which published the above journals. The other articles have been written for some occasions but published here for the first time.

Our sincere thanks are due to Dr. K. V. Raman, Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras for having kindly offered his illuminating foreword to this book.

But for the timely help of Thiru. K. Sridharan, Registering officer and Thiru. Thirugnanasambandam, Photographer and his colleagues of the Department of Archaeology, appropriate illustrations could not have been added. We are thankful to all of them. It wouldn't be complete if we do not express our thanks to Mrs. Lalitha, the steno of the Archaeology department for having neatly typed the articles in manuscript form and to Messrs S. Hariharan, Registering Officer, A. Abdul Majeed, Deputy Superintending Archaeologist and S. Chengalvarayan, Assistant Works Manager, for having corrected proofs while printing this book and Tirumatikal Marxia Gandhi, Assistant Superintending Epigraphist, Vasantha Kalyani and Padmavathi, Epigraphists for their unhesitating help in checking the foot notes. We also thank the entire printing staff of the the Department of Archaeology for neat printing and having finished the job in stipulated time. We hope that this collection would quench at least a little thirst of those who are interested in the art and culture of Tamilnadu. We express our deep gratitude to the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology for the supply of photographs.

January, 1993
Madras.

**Dr. Avvai. Natarajan**
**Natana. Kasinathan**

# 1

# Artistes of Ancient Tamilnadu

Tamilnadu had patronized the Artistes and Artisans even from Sangam period. There were poets, the songsters, (Panar), the dancers (viraliyar) and the dramatists (Kuttar). They exhibited their talents before the kings and got sumptuous prizes from them. They were even respected by the royal personages. They were invited to the feast with royal families. Sometimes the poets acted as royal emissaries between two countries during war time.

The musicians had different kinds of musical instruments such as Yal[1], Kulal[2], Mula[3], or Mulavu, Tannumai[4] Murasu, Pavai[5], Padalai[6] Kinai[7], Tandari[8], Tudi[9], Mattari[10], Ellari[11], Vayir[12], Kodu[13], Tumbu[14], and Cangu[15].

Vayir is a long trumpet-like instrument which is also known as Kodu and Tumbu. This is made out of a bamboo tube and resembles the trunk of an elephant. People who drive away the birds and rodents from the corn fields used this instrument.[16] The flute had five or seven perforations.[17] Invariably shepherds kept this instrument for leading their herds and locating them.

Yal was in two types, the small and the big *viz.* Siriyal and Periyal.[18] The components of a Yal are Maruppu, Pattal, Vay, Porvai, Tiravu or Vasikkattu, Kudai, Ani etc.

Murasu, Pari, Akuli, Padalai, Kinai and Tandari are different types of drum. Murasu was a very large drum and was a sign of royalty which had the three drums; the drum of justice, the drum of valour and the drum of sacrifice. Padalai is also known as Kinai. All those are played with a short and slightly crooked stick. Tudi is played by the fingers and palm. Ellari is also called Salli. Pandil was made of bronze plates. It was also called cymbol and Makuli. These instruments were kept in sheath in view of protection and endurance.[19]

The play and the dance were the favourite of men and women alike. However mostly women took to dancing. The venue or stage of the dance or play was called the *adu kalam* or arangu.

The stage plays were of many kinds Vallikkuttu,[20] Pedikkuttu,[21] Kalaikkuttu[22] Kudakkuttu etc.[23]

Silappatikaram gives a vivid picture on the nature of the stage and the qualifications of the dancer. It is also described in the work that the best dancer was honoured by offering Talaikkol and was called as Talaikkoli. Madavi was thus offered Talaikkol and since called Talaikkoli.[24]

The first inscriptional reference about the composition of music is available from Araccalur[25] in Periyar District. It contains the notations of the dance. The name of the composer of that notation is also mentioned in another inscription, from the same place, as Maniyvannakkan Tevan Cattan. The above stated inscriptions are datable to second - third centuries A.D.

Coming to Pallava period we get considerable references to music. The famous Kudumiyamalai inscription[26] and Tirumeyyam inscription[27] refer to different kinds of musical compositions to be played by Vina. Kudumiyamalai inscription specifically states that this notation is suitable for seven stringed and eight stringed Vina. The name of that notation is given as *Parivadini*. Tirumeyyam inscription also refers to this *Parivadini*. Besides this, it gives an interesting information about the master of this notation as Rudracharya. Hence Rudracharya may have been the great master on music during seventh century A.D.

Two royal personages were also great masters of music *viz.* Mahendravarman I and Rajasimha, the Pallava monarchs. Mahendravarman was himself an inventor of Sankirnajati, a kind in Tala group.[28] Rajasimha was also an accomplished musician. He is praised as Srivadyavidyadharah,[29] Vidyadhara on the instrument. Sri atodya Tumburu, a Tumburu on Atodya, and Sri vina Naradah, a Naradah on the vina, in his inscriptions.

In temple services some musicians were also appointed. For example in Muktisvara temple at Kanchipuram two men Amudaraiyan and Nayarrukkani were appointed to beat Tattali and were given two korru of rice as remuneration. Tattali is considered as a metallic plate beaten during the service in the temple. The persons who beat Tattali were called as Tattalikkottuvar.[30]

Tevaram hymns refer to a number of musical instruments such as Yal, Vina, Kulal, Kinnari, Kokkari, Saccari, Takkai, Mulavam, Mondai, Mrudangam, Mattalam, Tamarukam, Tuntubi, Kudamula, Tattalakam, Murasam, Udukkai, Talam, Tudi and Kodukottai.[31]

About dancers, during Pallava period, one gets meagre references from inscriptions. But there are some sculptural representations which are helpful

to understand the art of dance. There are some sculptures in Tanthonrisvarar temple, at Kanchipuram representing the Ahakkuttu[32] *i.e.* the dance performance of couples.

In Vaikuntanathaperumal temple, there are some sculptures representing group dances, composed of men and women. In one sculpture, the king Rajasimha is shown seated on his throne. His officials are also seen. Three dancers stand before him, the male one artistically dressed accompanied by two women dancers one on either side. It seems that they had just finished their dancing performance and are ready to watch a wrestling match, which is shown in the next panel.[33]

In another panel the march of a troop of nine men consisting of dancers and musicians are portrayed. The drummer leads the troupe while six men and two women dancers are following.[34] The significant fact to be noted here is that the dancing was not the monopoly of women only. But it was performed both by men and women during Pallava period. This reflects the continuous tradition of Sangam age. These dances may also be the kind of Pedikkuttu and Kalaikuttu.

The dances were also performed in temples, having some religious nature, during festival times. The Muktisvara temple at Kanchi and the Thyagesvarar temple at Tiruvottiyur maintained a large number of dancing women (adikalmar) for the performance of singing and dancing at the time of divine worship and services and during festivals.[35] These dancers were known as Adikalmar[36] Manikkattar and Kanikaiyar.[37] The famous Paravaiyar, wife of Sundaramurti nayanar, was the daughter of Rudraganika.

Two dancing girls found in painting on two pillars in the famous Chittannavasal cave, are the best examples for the early Pandyan period. The dancer on the right side pillar has her left arm in the 'gaja hasta' pose while her right arm is held in the chatura pose. The dancer on the left pillar has her left arm stretched out with grace as in the mode of dance described as Vrschika in the Natya Sastra.[38]

A dancing girl and a drummer are seen painted in the cave temple at Tirumalaipuram in Tirunelveli District.[39]

Pandya king Nedunjadaiyan Parantakan had a title as 'gitakinnaran'[40] which proclaims his deep interest on music.

The officials of Maranjadaiyan namely Marangari, Maran Eyinan and Murti Eyinan are said to have been descendants of a family which was famous for instrumental music and medicine.[41]

The Anantasayi panel at Tirumeyyam strikingly exhibits the earliest specimen of Makara yal and Tumburu.

Dancing and music flourished well during Chola period. Dancers and musicians were largely appointed in important temples in connection with the temple services and festivals. Dancing was always accompanied with music. Number of persons were appointed for playing different kind of instruments. The expert on a particular instrument was called as Vadyamarayan. The expert on dance was called as Nrttamarayan and Nrttapperarayan. There are number of references to Vadyamarayan[42], Nrttamarayan[43] and Nrttapperarayan[44] in Chola inscriptions.

Especially the inscriptions engraved on the walls of the Brihadeeswarar temple extensively inform us about the appoinment of nearly four hundred dancing girls, some nrttamarayars and some musicians. These dancing girls who were brought from many temples in Chola mandalam were settled in Thalicceri, the ceri adjoining the temple. The statement that they were brought from many temples shows that each temple in Tamilnadu had employed some dancing girls during Chola period. Among the dancers brought to Brihadeeswarar temple there were some who possessed the title of Talaikkoli.[45] These dancers are called as Talicceripendukal,[46] the women who lived in Talicceri.

To direct these dancing girls the dancing masters (Nattuvam ceyvar) were also employed. Six masters are referred to have been employed in the big temple. For vocal song four persons, for play back to vocal song, five persons, for playing *Vangiyam* three persons, for playing *Padaviyam* four persons, for playing *Udukkai* two persons, for playing *Vina* two persons, for singing *Ariyam* three persons, for singing *Tamil* four persons, for playing *Kottimattalam* two persons, for playing *Muttirai changu* (conch) three persons and for play back to changu twenty five persons were employed. Out of the twenty five persons employed for play back to conch thirteen persons seem to have been brought from infantry and one from cavalry. Two persons appear to have been appointed as superintendents (Nayakam ceyvar) for supervising the dancers and musicians. The musicians are mentioned as *Kandarvikal.*

In addition to these, sixty six persons have also been appointed for beating drums (cakadai). For enacting drama four persons were employed[47]. Thus Rajarajisvaram at Tanjore had played a role of a great employer of dancers and musicians.

The illustrious king Rajaraja's great interest on music and dance is fittingly attested by the paintings found on the outer walls of the garbhagrha

of Rajarajisvaram. A group of dancers and an expert dancer are seen in the painting. The expert dancer's rhythmic style is ever memorable in the artist's mind.

The dancing sculptures carved on the outer walls of the garbhagrha in the first tier are also of more interest. They depict different kinds of poses prescribed in Bharata's Natya Sastra. "These sculptures represent frozen moments of movements like the still photographs of a moving dancer."[48]

Similar sculptural representations of Karanas are found in Sarangapani temple at Kumbakonam, in Nataraja temple at Chidambaram, in Arunachaleswara temple at Tiruvannamalai and Vrddhagirisvarar temple at Virudhachalam. But these carvings are of later period between 12th and 14th centuries A.D.

The dancing scenes found on the base of the prakara walls of the Sivakami Amman temple at Chidambaram and at Kampaharesvarar temple at Tribhuvanam are standing specimens of the nature of dance in Chola times. The sculptures represent various Karanas of Natya Sastra, accompanying number of musicians. These panels illustrate the number of instruments prevalent during that period. That the dance had attained more importance in Chola period is known from the fact that Chola queen Lokamadevi had gifted a mirror bearing the ornamental work of a dancer, a drummer and a songster to the temple at Tiruvaiyaru.[49]

The art of dance had become a part and parcel of religious rituals. People dedicated themselves voluntarily to temples in order to dance in daily services and festivals. They called themselves as Devaradiyars, the servants of God and Patiyilar, one who hails from no village or has no husband. They had been stamped trisula mark on the shoulders if they were attached to the Siva temples.

At Thiruvallam, in 1119 A.D., one of the villikal (bowmen) of Banapura dedicated some women of his family as devaradiyar after stamping them with the trident.[50] It seems that they had been living in a separate cheri, not mingling with other people. It also appears that the hereditary right had vested not with the male member of the family but with the female member.

The inscription of Rajarajisvaram temple lays down some principles regarding the appointment of dancers, (1) If any dancer dies or goes to other country the next heir has to dance and can get her share of land (2) If the next heir is not a truthful person, then the committee of justice

has to select some other person in her place and allot the share to her.[51] Though they were called as Patiyilar (those who have no husbands) they enjoyed the freedom of leading the married life.

Some of the dancers were economically in better position. They had the right of possessing lands and were able to donate lands to the temple and for some public purpose. The dancers employed in Brihadeeswarar temple at Tanjore had been given 100 Kalams per head in a year. A dancer by name Nakkan Tiruvilankoil *alias* Tirukkuruttittalai is said to have endowed a lamp in memory of her brother Piramban Pisangi to the temple of Neyyadiyappar of Tillaistanam. Another dancer Nakkan Urimai Alagiya Perumal Talaikkoli had consecrated Subrahmanya Pillaiyar in the Temple of Tirunelveli Udaiyar at Tirunelveli. By doing some benefactory activities they acquired special privileges in temple services.

A record from Tirumalai (Ramnad) in the fifth year of the reign of Jatavarman Kulasekhara[52] mentions "the meeting of the big assembly of the Mahesvaras of the eighteen districts held in the hall called Tirugnana-sambandan - tiruveduttukkatti in the temple of Srivasudeva Isvaramudaiya Nayanar at Alagaimanagar to show their appreciation of the services rendered by a devaradiyal to several temples of the locality, such as setting up of certain images wanting in the temples and the construction of prakaras, by confering on her family the hereditary honour of sounding the conch and beating the drum at the time of entry into the temple."[53]

Devaradiyars endowed money to some public works also. Kalingaraya Talaikkoli had gifed land by purchasing from Taliyilal Nakkan Nacciyar *alias* Taruyanaivittaperumal to repair the banks of the tank.[54] Another dancer Kuttan Nambiratti *alias* Ceyyaperumal endowed some land for jivanam of Tiruttondars who plucked flowers for early morning service of a temple.

At the time of Mughal invasion the temples suffered seriously. The dependents upon the temples were also left in panic condition. The dancers became poor and had to migrate to other distant places. Fortunately Vijayanagar kings intervened and had driven out the mughals. They re-established the original status of the temples and its dependents.

An example may be cited here. The times were Turukkan times; the devadana lands of the gods were taxed with Kudimai, the temple worship, however had to be conducted without any reduction, the Ulavu or cultivation of the temple lands were done by turns by the tenants of the village; at this juncture Kampana Udaiyar came on his southern campaign destroyed the Turukkan, established orderly government throughout the country and appointed many chiefs (Nayakkanmar) for inspection and

supervision in order that the worship in all temples might be revived regularly as of old. It is further stated that some of the dancing girls of the temple (devaradiyar) died, some became very poor, and many were ready to migrate to other distant places. For the preservation of the original status of the temple, some of its land which was enjoyed as Kaniyatchi by a certain Narasingadevar was now sold to another person, the former having died without leaving an heir, for the maintenance of ten dancing girls including provision for "food, betel leaf, cloth and houses in the street Pavanangakaran tiruvidi."[55]

When the position of Devaradiar deteriorated the divisions among them became more prominent. A dispute among them is recorded in an inscription of Tiruvorriyur.

This inscription informs us "that the trustees of the temple of Tiruvorriyur found that a number of Patiyilar who were doing duty in accordance with the previous decision arrived at the time of Sundara Pandya had either died or had been reduced to straightened circumstances in life. Thereupon they appointed some Ishabhattaliyar to assist Padiyilar and exempted the Devaradiyar from doing certain duties such as cleaning with cowdung, cleaning the rice required for rice offering etc., which they used to do before this arrangement came into force. It was also settled that the dance in the shrine of goddess and the waiting upon the goddess with chowries were assigned to the Devaradiyars and Padiyilars. The devaradiyars carried everywhere the plates while the Ishabhattaliyar displayed Agamargam and Varikkolam. When the Padiyilar plated sokkam and performed the dance the Ishabhattaliyar supplied vocal music. 25 years later, it is noted that the Padiyilar, Ishabhattaliyar and Devaradiyar had struck work in the temple and that previous attempts at reconciling their differences by the Mudaliyars of Chidambaram and subsequently by the trustees had proved abortive. The temple officials made enquiries for the cause of the strike and having called together a meeting of the Srirudras, Sri Mahesvaras, Ishabhattaliyars and Devaradiyars had settled a procedure in the matter of order to be followed by them in the temple service. However three years later the dispute was again taken up, more representatives than the previous occasion gathered including trustees and district representatives and the question was amicably settled."[56]

A recent find of a copper plate discovered by the Department of Archaeology[57] records the death of a dancer in the possession of a Nattumanikkam of Melappanaiyur in Pudukkottai district. Nattumanikkam is the title conferred on a devadasi who is still receiving some honour from the temple of her village.

The record registers the gift of land in memory of the voluntary death of Manikkattal along with an officer of the government to her family. The officer who came from the house of Manikkattal to worship during the festival of Pidari Amman, had suddenly collapsed. On hearing the news of the demise of that officer, Manikkattal had voluntarily offered her life. On seeing this incident the villagers assembled and resolved to make gift of some land to the family of Manikkattal.

Though there are a few references about dramas in Pallava period they are not sufficient to understand the life of the dramatists. But in Chola period one gets evidences describing the names of dramas and the dramatists and the remuneration paid to the dramatists.

An inscription of the time of Rajaraja refers to the gift of land as *Nrttya bogam* to Kumaran Srikanda in order to enact the drama of *Tirumulanayanar* during the festival of Purattacit tiruvila in the temple of Tiruvaduturai.[58]

In the time of Rajaraja II, the drama of Rajarajeswara had been enacted regularly during the festivel of Vaikasit tiruvila at Brihadeesvarar temple, Thanjavur.[59] The drama was enacted by Tiruvalantirumutukunram *alias* Vijaya Rajendra Acaryan by getting 120 Kalams of Paddy per year from royal treasury.

Similarly during the time of Kulottunga I, it seems that a drama Pumpuliyur' to have been enacted at the temple of Padalipurisvarar in 'Tiruppatirippuliyur. The author of this drama is mentioned as *'Parasamaya kolari Mamuni'*. For this act he had been honoured by offering the gift of land in Palaiyur.[60]

As the drama, dance and music are interwoven, the persons of these three fields were also very close friends. Their deep affection on each other is reflected from two inscriptions of Kulottunga Chola III period. These epigraphs refer to the death of a songster and a dancer along with a dramatist, Poruti Kangan. The songster and the dancer had voluntarily offered their lives when the dramatist died.[61] This unnatural incident shows how these artists had been very close not only in profession but also in real life.

The later Pandyas had also encouraged the art of Drama and Dramatists. An epigraph from Attur in Tirunelveli District refers to the Natakasala as *Alagiya Pandyan Kudam* wherein a drama called *Tirunatakam*

had been enacted by Santikkutta Tirumeni Piriyadan. The author of this drama was gifted two *ma* of land as Kuttukkani by Kunramoliccingappiran *alias* Kunkulakaraiyan.[62]

Thus the artistes had played an unforgettable role in religious as well as secular activities of the Tamil Society in ancient Tamilnadu.

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1. Puram 152: 14
2. Aham 10: 13
3. Puram 152: 14
4. Aham 106: 12-13
5. Malaipadukadam 321
6. Ibid. 11
7. Puram. 392: 5
8. Ibid. 398: 12
9. Ibid. 287: 1
10. Paripadal 12: 41
11. Puram. 114: 16
12. Murugu. 120
13. Aham. 94: 10-11
14. Tumbu. 114: 15
15. Mullai 92: Kurunji 15: 1
16. Aham. 94: 10-11
17. Paripadal 8: 20
18. Sirupan. 34-35
19. Aham. 189:13
20. Perum. 370-71: Tolporul, Puram.: 5
21. Aham. 206: 2-3
22. Narrinai 95: 1-2
23. Paripadal 3: 83
24. Silappathikaram, Puhar Kandam - Kadaladu Kadai - Li. 56-57
25. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, *Kalvettiyal*, pp. 75-79.
26. *Epi. Ind.* Vol. XII
27. *Indian Antiquary* Vol. LII. p. 47.
28. *S.I.I.* Vol. I. p. 17
29. Dr. C. Minakshi - *Pallava Administration and* Social *life under Pallavas*, p. 214
30. *S.I.I.* Vol. III. p. 265.
31. Dr. M. Rajamanikkam, *Pallavar Varalaru*, (Tamil) p. 284
32. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, *Damilica*, Vol. I
33. Vaikuntaperumal temple, North wall, panel XII
34. Ibid. Panel XX.
35. Dr. C. Minakshi, *Pallava Administration and Social life under Pallavas*, p. 314
36. *A.R.E.* 303/1901
37. Ibid. 278, 302/1916

38. Dr. C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under Pallavas*, p. 312
39. Dr. C. Sivaramamurthy, *South Indian Paintings*
40. Dr. K. V. Raman, *Pandiyar Varalaru*, p. 227.
41. Siva
42. *S.I.I.* Vol. II. No. 66
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. *S.I.I.* Vol. V. 520
46. Ibid. Vol. II, No. 66
47. Ibid.
48. Padma Subrahmanyam, *South Indian Studies* p. 109.
49. Natana Kasinathan, Nadanakkalai *Revue Hisrotique De Pondichery*, p. 71
50. *A.R.E.* 230 of 1921
51. *S.I.I.* Vol. II. No. 66
52. *A.R.E.* 33 of 1924
53. Ibid. 1924, Part II, Para 26
54. *S.I.I.* Vol. VII, No. 169
55. *A.R.E.* 1916, Part II, para 33
56. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, *Studies in Ancient Tamil Law and Society*, p. 140.
57. A. Abdul Majeed, Registering officer of the Department of Archaeology has located this plate
58. K. Damodaran, *Tamilaka Voralattru aruviyil sila manikal*, p. 140
59. Ibid. p. 82
60. Ibid. p. 83
61. Tamaraipakkam Inscription,, copied by the Department of Archaeology
62. *A.R.E*, 444, 445 of 1929-30

An apsara Painting, 9th century A.D., Pandya period
Sithannavasal, Pudukkottai District.

An apsara, Painting, Rajaraja I period, Big Temple, Tanjore, Tanjore District.

Danseuse with Musicians, 13th century A.D., Sivakami Amman Temple, Chidambaram, South Arcot District.

# 2

# Artisans of Ancient Times

Tamilnadu has encouraged the artisans from the very beginning of the Christian era. The works of artisans were highly appreciated by the poets. A carpenter was praised to be able to manufacture eight chariots in a day.[1] *Perumbanarruppadai* describes about the beautiful toy chariots made by the carpenters. *Maduraikkanchi* says that the carpenters were experts to bring in shape what they have visualized in their minds.[2]

*Silappadhikaram* mentions about the settlements of brazier, carpenter, blacksmith and goldsmith in Maruvurppakkam of Kavirippumpattinam.[3] *Manimekalai* refers not only to the indigenous artisans but also to artisans of other regions. It says that the *Vinainar* (may be of carpentars) of Magada, the braziers of Maharashtra and the carpenters of Yavana (foreign country) had mingled with the indigenous artisans and constructed beautiful buildings.[4]

The earliest inscriptional reference (Second century B.C.) on goldsmith comes from Alagarmalai near Madurai. It refers to the gift of probably the rock bed by one individual Atan, a goldsmith of Madurai.[5]

Another inscription found at Mamandur, near Kanchipuram states that the rock bed was made by *ciru....van* the stone mason.[6].

An inscription at Tirupparankundram has been read as follows:

Errukkatur ilakkutumpikan polalayan
Ceyta aycayan netucatan.

But this may be read in a slightly modified form. The reading is

Erukatur ilakutumpikan polalayan
ceytaaycayan netucatan.

According to the new reading Netucatan, the stone mason, made that rock-bed. The inscription dated in third century A.D. recently found by the Department of Archaeology at Pulankurichi[7] in Ramnad District had been engraved by one Nariyangari of Venadu. He may have been a carpenter. The cave inscription found at Pillaiyarpatti in Ramnad district refers to the architect of that cave as Erukkatturkkon Peruntacan.

Coming to Pallava period there are enough evidences to study the true position of the artisans in a mixed society. They were seemed to have been treated respectably by the royal personages. They were more close to the kings to have been appointed as *Rahasya Krt*.[8] (Secret Writer)

The engravers of the copper-plates were highly spoken of by the prasasti writers. In Hallahara copper-plates the *acharyan* is compared with *Visvakarma*.[9] This *acaryan's* name is also Visvakarmacaryan. In Unnakuravayam plates, the scribe is mentioned to have originated from *Kanaskand vamsa*.[10] The scribe of Kasakkudi plates was Parameswaran *alias* Mahakastakari.[11]

In some copper-plates the engraver's native place is also referred to. Velurpalayam plates say that the scribe was Perayan, son of Kastakari of Aimmaniceri in Kaccippedu.[12] The father of Perayan may have been the same Mahakastakari who engraved the Kasakkudi copper plates. Perayan is said to have been famed because of his hard work. He is also described as *Stapatikula Vyomacandra* (a moon in the sky, the family of the stapatis). This is the earliest reference about *Stapatikula* in Tamil inscriptions. In another plate the scribe is referred to as Sri Tandiyan, son of Videlviduku Pallavapperuntaccan of Aimpanaicceri in Kaccippedu.[13] The name Videlviduku Pallavapperuntaccan may have been assumed after Nandivarman Pallavamallan, the Pallava King. Aimpanaicceri is the corrupted form of Aimmanaicceri which may have been denoting the five divisions of artisans.

Bahur plates of Nrpatungavarman extol in high terms the family of the goldsmith who engraved the letters on them. He is described as the foremost of his *Utitotita kula* well versed in all *sastras* and the traditional servant of *Pallava kula*. His name is given as Nrpatungan, assumed obviously after his overlord Nrpatunga Pallava. He has left his signature mentioning that he was a native of Kilparisaram in Kaccippedu[14] being the son of Madevipperuntattan and the grandson of Utitotayapperuntattan.

Velanjeri plate of Aparajita not only mentions the name of the engraver but also tells the remuneration he got for his service. Vijayanna who inscribed the *prasasti* got one patti of wet land. The name of the brazier who embossed the seal of that plate is also known as Videlviduku Perunkannan. He also was given one share[15]. Vijayannan is described as the foremost among the silpins, holding the fortune and born out of grace of the king. He was born in the city of Kanchi. Since most of the Pallava royal charters were issued from Kanchipuram those were engraved by the silpins of Kanchipuram.

In the court of Dantivarman there was a very famous architect. He was the architect who constructed the great Sundaravaradapperumal temple at Uttiramerur. In praise of his service a high tribute had been made and engraved in letter which is the standing evidence of today. The relevant portion of the inscription says thus:

"He who knows the essential nature of the entire science of Architecture (i.e., building temples, palaces etc.)"

"This shrine, shining, as it were, as the sun among the shrines of the village and adored by its name and class etc. was built in conjunction with the agamikas of this village versed in agamic principles and practice, by one truthful and dexterous Paramesvara Takshaka of Pataka"[16].

It appears that he was supreme among the architects versed in *Vastu Vidya*. *Vastu Vidya* is the text that deals with the architectural details of the building. He was also well versed in *agamic* principles and practice. Construction of temples must be true to the *agamic* principles. Hence he was proficient in that text also.

It is said that the artisans who had executed the world-famous temples of Mamallapuram had left their names on small rocks, popularly known as Ṇondivirappan Kudiraittotti, adjacent to Mamallapuram[17]. Their names are written as (1)Kevatapperuntaccan (2)Gunamallan, (3)Payyamilippan (4)Catamukkiyan (5)Kaliyani (6)Namah Tiruvorriyur Ā(bhā)jar and (7)Kollan Semagan in Pallava grantha-Tamil characters. Kevatapperuntaccan may have been the chief architect among them.

The artisans had been engaged not only in engraving the royal charters and in the construction of temples, but also in establishing irrigational sluices. One Kuvanataccan is said to have made the sluice which was gifted by Nakkan, the son of Koorayanandar of Arrur situated in Nedungal Nadu, a subdivision of Indurkkottam, during the reign of Nandivarman II[18].

The royal charters of Pandyas had also been written by the expert artisans of that period. The famous Velvikkudi copper-plates had been inscribed by Yuddakesaripperumpanaikaran[19]. From his name 'Yuddakesari' it is known that he was a mighty soldier also. He was paid a house site and two *ma* of wet land and one *ma* of dry land for his service.

Sinnamanur copper plates and Sivaramangalam copper-plates were engraved by one Arikesari Perumpanaikaran, the son of Pandiperumpanaikaran[20]. *Perumpanai* may denote the lathe of blacksmith.

Tirupparappu copper-plates of Ay King Kokkarunandadakkan had also been engraved by one Srivallavapperumpanaikaran *alias* Aviyalanradakkan.[21]

The scribe of the Dalavaipuram copper-plates was highly extolled by the prasasti writer of both Sanskrit and Tamil portions. The Sanskrit portion describes that this chart had been engraved by Nakkan who was the foremost among the karmars of the king and master of all *silpis*. The Tamil portion says that the scribe of this chart was Nakkan who came from the family of those who had carved bow, tiger and two fishes on the golden mountain, Imayam and the father of one who composed *prasastisesham* of this chart.

The composer of the *prasastisesham* of this chart is also an artisan, a blacksmith, by name Pandimarayapperunkollan *alias* Srivallavan. He is also praised both in Sanskrit and Tamil portions. While the Sanskrit portion praises him in about two lines saying that he was a kavi (poet), an *alankar* to *Pandya Tramidars* (Travidar, Tamilar), the chief among Karmars and one who was always remembering the feet of Siva, the Tamil portion pays the tribute extensively. It delineates that he was the descendant of those who made the axe at the request of Siva, a descendant of sage Manu, was also called as Panditatasan, belongs to South Vaigai Nadu, the Chieftain of Kuntur, had several titles such as Tamilabaranan and whose name was Pandimarayapperunkollan.

In recognition of their service, the poet and the scribe were awarded the lands named Kannan Kiranvayakkal and Somaci vayakkal along with three wells. The area in between the three wells were gifted as house sites and gardens for them. They were also given the right of getting half share in fishing in the tanks probably of their village.[22] The royal charters and the stone inscriptions of the Chola period throw more valuable light on artisans. The most informative inscriptions about the origin, the nature of work and the assembly of them are one from Alangudi in Trichy District,[23] the other from Tiruvarur in Tanjore District[24] and the third from Uyyakondan Tirumalai in Trichy District.

Though the inscription of Alangudi dated in 1264 A.D. is highly damaged, its importance is very great. It gives the legendary account of the artisans and the proceedings of their assembly which had its jurisdiction over eighteen districts.

The damaged Sanskrit verse found in the beginning of the inscription starts with the word "Upajivita". The preserved Tamil portion of the text seems to contain the *prasasti* of the artisans. It tells us "that the Rathakaras, who were of four classes and did six kinds of work had Arya-nadu as their place of birth and acquired Uttarapatti; they

measured Tavappalli and obtained by conquest the *makara* flag; they witnessed the dance of Isvara and had, by the favour of (the deity) Kattavur Ammal, a rain of gold; they were renowned for righteous acquisition of wealth; for prosperity attended with greatness; for flawless family tradition; for power of utterance; for leading a life of fearlessness; for reducing enemies to ashes; for victories gained in all battles undertaken by them; for securing the grace of Devadana and for their extensive fame and progeny. Their industrial pursuits won the admiration of all. Akkasalai and Palli were in their charge[25].

At the end of the *Prasasti* portion the inscription records that the Rathakaras had assembled in full in the temple of Vanduvarapati (Perumal) at Rajaraja caturvedimangalam in Suttamallivalanadu and carried out a resolution to the effect that an *inavari* shall be paid by all persons living in the several districts to raise a fund from which the expenses of constructing a pavilion called Muludumvallan, in the Tirunirruccolantoppu at Alangudi *alias* Janathacaturvedimangalam in Mudicconadu, a subdivision of Suttamallivalanadu, in order that the God Apatsahayesvara be taken in procession and made to rest there.

The above decision was communicated to the Rathakaras of the districts and to the *samaya sanketins* of the Nadu. Viramaheswaras were authorised to collect *inavari* and to remit it into the treasury.

This agreement was signed by a number of persons. Among them Periyanattuacari, Rathakaracakravartti, Padinenbhumi Rathakara Cakravarti, Koyilkaniyudaiyaperuntaccan, Periyanattu Peruntaccan and Tattan etc. are the artisans. This inscription is a clear evidence that the artisans were also called as Rathakaras. They were united, they took any decision only after proper discussion and the decision arrived at in the meeting could bind all the artisans living in the eighteen mandalams.

The origin of the artisans and their professions are found described in the inscription of Uyyakondan Tirumalai, Tiruchi District. The inscription is dated in the forty-eighth year (1118 A.D.) of the reign of Tribhuvanachakravartin Kulottunga Chola I.

It says that the Anuloma was the son of Mahisya by a *karani* woman. The following professions are attributed to him: Architecture, building coaches and chariots, erecting *gopuras* of temples with images on them, making instruments for use in sacrificial ceremonies, building *mandapams* and making jewels for kings such as diadems, bracelets etc.

More details about Anuloma and Pratiloma sects are found in Tiruvarur inscription engraved in 12th century grantha characters. It

records the decisions arrived at the meeting of learned Brahmins of Pandyakulantaka Chaturvedimangalam on the traditional origin of the artisans, their education and adoption of their learning to their profession. Some quotations on them from literatures have also been given in it.

This inscription also refers to artisans as *Rathakara*. They are said to have been born as *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma*. Anulomas are described as those who were the sons of high caste father and a low caste mother. Pratilomas are said to have been born of low caste male and a high caste female. *Anuloma* class is considered to be superior to the Pratiloma class. All the texts quoted in this inscription explain the birth of Rathakara of mixed caste. Some literature refers to them as of low birth people as they were born of Sangirna caste while other literature say that they are Acaryans and all works have to be done by them only.

Most of the literature eulogize them. They say that those who make ornaments out of gold are called *swarnakaras*, ayaskars, those who do carpentry work and those who work on iron are called Taksan, those who make figures are called *Tvastas,* also known as *Rathakaras*, and those who construct temples with Gods and Goddesses are called *Stapatis*. They further tell that the words *stapati*, *visvakarma*, *taksan*, *tvasta*, *rathakar*, *kastakar*, *varthaki* all would denote *silpi*.

Some literature concede that they could wear *yagnopavita* and could perform *Sandyavandanam.* But they forbid them from performing *yajna* and *agnihotram* and reciting the Veda. *Upanayana* of the *Rathakara*, it is said, has to be performed without quoting mantras. Some authorities quoted in the inscription say that they are well versed in Vedas *nitisastras* and experts in astronomy. They are, it is said, also known as *acaryas*.

Establishing the cities, carving the images, making implements etc. are prescribed as their duties. Rathakara is said to have been well versed in Vastu Vidya, and expert in archery and in removing the arrows and thorns. Corroborating the statement of these texts an evidence has come from a copper-plate. The scribe of Tirupparappu copper-plates is referred to have made implements to the king Kokkarunandadakkan.

That the artisans lived in separate hamlets adjoining big cities is known from inscriptions. An inscription[26] from Chidambaram refers to the establishment of a *nagara*, Gunamenagaipuram, and states that it shall have in it as inhabitants such as vyaparis (merchants), Velir (cultivators), Sankarapadiyar (oil mongers), Saliyar (weavers) and Pattinavar as well as the Kilkalanai classes, viz. *taccar* (carpenters), kollar (blacksmiths),

tattar (goldsmith) and koliyar, that are desirous of entering it. It may be noted that taccar, kollar, tattar and koliyar are here called as Kilkalanai. K. V. Subrahmanya Ayyar thinks that the term Kilkalanai corresponds to the sanskrit anuloma. He also points out that the kaikkolar, saliyar, vanigar, senaiangadiyar and koyil angadiyar formed purakalanai, a term that is akin to and perhaps derived from pratiloma as kilkalanai seems to be derived from anuloma.[27] In some epigraphs their living place is specifically mentioned as Kammalacceri[28].

The four main divisions of Rathakaras may be the carpenter, koliyar, blacksmith and goldsmith. Another artisan, brazier, is rarely met with in inscriptions, koliyar may be an artist (painter) who uses brush (kol) for his drawings.

The Chola kings had highly honoured the artisans. Not only the kings but also the queens showed more favour to them. Since the construction of temples was in increase, the need of artisans was very much felt. Moreover the artisans were also learned in vedas, agamas and vastu sastras. They were truthful and upright. They knew astrology and could test the soil and find out flaws in stones.

The artisans who built important temples had got their names also inscribed on them. The name of the architect who built the great Temple Rajarajaisvaram at Tanjore is mentioned in inscription as Viracolan Kuncaramallan alias Rajarajapperuntaccan. He was assisted in this task by two carpenters by name Ilatti Cataiyan alias Kantaradittapperuntaccan and Kunavan Madurantakan alias Nittavinodapperuntaccan. Virasolan Kuncaramallan alias Rajarajapperuntaccan seems to be the chief architect for which he got three shares; while the other two got three-fourths of the share each in recognition of their service[29].

The architects of Lokamadevisvaram is clearly found in inscription as follows:

"Ittirukkarrali ceyta
taccacariyan Eluvadiyan karonanana
Puvanimanikka acaryanukkum merpadi
taliceyta Nakkanaccanana
Kaliyukarampaip peruntaccanukkum
marattaccak kaniyal nilan kalum"[30]

Eluvadiyan Karonanana Puvani manika Acaryan and Nakkanaccan alias Kaliyukarampaipperuntaccan were the architects. They were awarded one-forth of a land.

Similarly the architect of the temple at Tiruvamattur in South Arcot District is also referred to as Taccan Naranan Vekandaran alias Tiruvamattur Acaryan.

Consecration of images in temples was also made by artisans. In one instance an acariyan by name Imaiyor Nayakavacariyan, son of Erukka-cariyan, is said to have consecrated Kamala Nayakar in Parasurameswara temple at Gudimallam without getting any remuneration (vastukondu eluntaruliviyate eluntarulivitta). But the members of Tiruvunnalikai and the Mahesvarars of that temple gave half of a land as *bhumidana* to him.[31]

In another instance the Stanattars of a temple, desiring to consecrate a Sripita requested the acariyars to do so. But the acariyars did not do it. Then the acari Udayadivakaran who had the temple land came forward and consecrated the pita. For his memorable service he was offered tax-free land.[32]

It is understood that in every village there must have been some portion of lands as taccakkani,[33] tattarakkani,[34] acariyakkani[35] etc. Those lands must have been assigned to those who did the respective services. Alangudi, a village in TanjoreDistrict, had a portion of land as silpacaryakkani. That and was possessed by Sanduyan Udaiyan alias Sirilango Acariyan during the, time of Rajaraja II in 1147 A.D.[36]

Similarly the temples had also allotted some portion of their lands to the artisans permanently. When the temple appoints somebody as its artisans that portion of land will be assigned to him. Lokamadevisvaram temple built by Danti-sakti Vitanki alias Lokamadevi, queen of Rajaraja I and mother of Rajendra I at Tiruvaiyaru had in its possession "Tattarappani cey kani" and is said to have assigned that land to tattan Sakkadi-Camutaiyan alias Cembiyan Madevipperuntattan as tattarakkani on the specific instruction of Lokamadevi,[37] in the year 1016 A.D.

Since the artisans were in good position they had donated land, cash and sheep to the temples. Senanayakakoyir peruntaccan who had land in Colakeralanallur, the south hamlet of Sripatatuliccaruppedimangalam, had endowed some land as Tiruvilakkuppuram to the temple of Tiruvenkadu Udaiyar.[38]

Srikuvaimangalapperuntattan of Kuram is said to have gifted pon to burn a perpetual lamp to the Mahadevar of Peruntirukkoyil[39] Kollain-kumuranicalan alias Viranaranapperunkollan of Neduvayil in Karaik-katticennivalakkurram had gifted 45 sheep to burn a lamp in daytime in the temple of Mahadevar of Tirumalavadi.[40]

Thousands of inscriptions, the invaluable wealth of the Tamils, found engraved on the temples and rocks are the creations of the artisans. They had engraved them on the suggestion of the members of the sabhas or the stanattar of the temple. In most of the inscriptions it is clearly mentioned that the scribe had engraved them at the instance of the

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sabha of the village or the stanattar of the temple.[41] In some cases after having written the entire matter the scribe had affixed his signature also.[42] There are some instances where the scribe had affixed his signature on behalf of somebody who were not known to put their signatures.[43] It seems also that some of the artisans had been appointed as liaison officers (Naduvirukkai).[44] In some cases the artisans had also assisted in demarcating the boundaries of the gifted villages.

In recognition of their benevolent acts and their invaluable services the artisans were accorded some special privileges. An inscription of Modakkur records that the artisans (kanmalars) of Talaiyur nadu, Vengala nadu, Araiya nadu, Idaippulu nadu, Vadakaraimanalur nadu, Tattaiyur nadu and Kilangu nadu were allowed to blow double conch on auspicious and bad occasions, to beat drums, to wear chappals wherever they went and to plaster their houses.[45] Another inscription of Pariyur in Coimbatore District registers that the artisans of Kancikoval nadu were permitted to play all instruments including the double conch and to wear chappals wherever they went.[46]

Likewise a Vijayanagar inscription of the time of Srirangadeva Maharaja records that the same rights and privileges as were in vogue to their classes in Padaividu, Senji, Tiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram should be accorded to the three artisan communities *(Kammalar)*, carpenters, blacksmiths and goldsmiths of the several villages in the northern parru.[47]

From these above inscriptions one should not come to the conclusion that these artisans were deprived of these privileges ever before the time of these epigraphs. During Pallava and early Pandya periods they could have enjoyed these privileges. Even during the medieval Chola period they might have got these privileges since they were highly respected by the kings and queens. At the end of Chola and Pandya periods there was a downfall in all fields and in all activities. Want of artisans could not have been in the same ratio as was in earlier periods. Therefore, the artisans might have lost their resources and reduced to destitution.

The artisans were even driven to the extent of stealth from the temples with the connivance of others. An inscription of Srivirapandya dated in his second regnal year states that the ornaments of Tirunalkunramudaiyar temple had been found stolen. On enquiry Kunran Cherundivanapperumal *alias* Edirilicolapattan and the mason of that village were found to have stolen them.[48]

Involvement of two artisans in a forgery case is also referred to in an epigraph. This epigraph belonging to Tirupattur, dated in Saka 1309 i.e., 1387 A.D., registers that the accountant Kulalan Ambalattaduvan alia Ayirattelunurru Muvendavelan had deliberately engraved on a stones

stating that he had a house-site and some privileges in the village with the help of the goldsmith Ayirattelunurruvan and the mason Alaivayugandan while he knew distinctly that he had nothing of that sort, and having made this act known Ambalattaduvan had run away. On knowing their crime the goldsmith and the mason were excommunicated by their own people.[49] It is interesting to note that the punishment on these two artisans was awarded by their community people themselves.

The miserable position of an artisan in 1219 A.D. is revealed from an inscription wherein it is stated that a stone mason, his wife and four sons of them were sold out as *adimai*[50].

During Vijayanagar period the encouragement for fine arts had again been revived. Temple construction found more important place. Consequently artisans were badly needed and their service was highly appreciated. The names of the *silpis* who erected the north gopura of Nataraja temple at Chidambaram are found carved on the gopuram itself. Their names are also found written below their figures as follows: (1) Viruttagiriyil Kesavapperumal (2) Visuvamuthu, the son of former, (3) son of Tiruppiraikkodai acari, (4) His brother Karanacari.[51]

The Nayak rulers had also patronized the artisans very much. They also gave due importance to the artisans in their copper-plates. An interesting copper-plate grant, now preserved in the Vishnu temple of Tirukkannamangai in Tanjore District records the gift of certain lands to the temple of Vishnu at Tirukkannamangai, by the Tanjore Nayak ruler Vijaya Raghunatha Nayak.

"Unlike the usual charters, the present charter begins with three panels of figures incised. The first panel carries a standing Vishnu image flanked by Sridevi and Bhudevi. To the extreme right is shown Lakshmi as Tayar seated with four arms. To the left is Andal standing. Obviously this is the presiding deity of the Thirukkannamangai temple, Abhishekavalli Tayar and Andal.

In the centre of the second panel is Krishna dancing on the snake Kaliya. To his left is a seated person, probably Nammalvar. Flanking them are shown Siva and Brahma, adoring the central image. Further away are shown seated and standing sages and devotees. To the extreme right is Surya standing.

The third panel is more interesting. In the centre is shown Garudadhvaja, with Garuda shown at the top. To the left of the pillar is shown a royal figure standing in *anjali* pose. A sword is shown on

his waist. He has crown but wears his hair in *dammilla* fashion usually found in Nayak sculptures. The figure is obviously the portrait of the donor king Vijaya Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore.

To the right of the Garuda pillar is a temple priest welcoming the ruler to the temple with *purna kalasa*. Another priest standing behind him carries a bell. Behind the ruler is also a priest. At the extreme end are shown two soldiers, one on either side, carrying long swords, tucked in their arm pits. Such sword bearing body guards may be seen even today accompanying the ruler to the temple in Ananta Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum."[52]

The point of interest in this plate is that we are informed of the name of the artist who draw the figures which explains that royal personages visited and worshiped the presiding deity, as Venkitacala Acari, son of Lakshmana Acari of Tanjore. The chart is dated in Saka era 1530, corresponding to 1608 A.D. It is understood that the skill of the artisan had not been degraded even in 17th century.

Madurai Nayak ruler Visvanatha Nayaka had also conferred some privileges on artisans. In Saka 1581, i.e., 1659 A.D. he issued an order permitting the five divisions of *Kammalar* or *Pancalattar* use of the privileges of elephant, double chowries, white umbrella, Palanquin, tents etc. when they go out in the Madurai and Tiruchirappalli desa.[53]

There was a learned artisan in the 16th century also. A goldsmith of Nallur in the Pandya country wrote the "*Arichandra Purana*" in 1524 A.D.[54]

The inscriptions often refer to a group of people as Anjuvannam.[55] Scholars differ on the interpretation of this word Anjuvannam. Some say that it refers to a trade guild as like Nanadesi and Valanjiyar. But some are of the opinion that it refers to the five kinds of artisans. In support of the latter opinion they cite the word panchalattar, which is frequently occuring in inscriptions to denote the five kinds of artisans such as goldsmiths, blacksmiths, brassmiths, carpenters and idol makers.

The Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy for the year 1949-50 reports that a curious bronze plaque, the obverse of which contains sculptures in seven rows depicting several Gods and Goddesses and some artisan tools, was received from Pondicherry by Dr. A.Bigol. The reverse of the plaque contains an inscription in Telugu which registers an agreement between two disputing artisan communities. The disputants are said to have come to an agreement in the presence of a certain Dakanacari who bears a number of interesting epithets such as the "Lord of Pendolpura" devotee of the Goddess Kalikadevi and Kamathesvara etc. The sculptured panel on the

obverse of the plate evidently represents these deities and the artisan tools, the emblems of the communities. The inscription is not dated but may be assigned to the 16th or 17th century A.D. on palaeographical grounds.[56]

Like this bronze plaque, a stone bearing the artisan tools and the figure of Gajalakshmi has been noticed recently at Tiruppalanam in Tanjore District. An inscription is also found on the other side of the stone.[57]

From the figures found on the copper-plaque and stone it may be inferred that the artisans had followed the *Saktam* i.e. *Sakti* cult, since *Sakti* (energy) is essential for their efficient services.

With regard to artist (Painter), barring the Sangam age, there is no specific reference, except the mention of *Koliyar* as an artisan community in the chola period. But very valuable paintings had been drawn during Pallava, Chola, early Pandya, Vijayanagara, Nayak, Maratha and Sethupathi periods. They are all well preserved even today.

It is known that the kings were personally interested in drawing paintings. Pallava king Mahendravarman is said to have been a great patron of art and he himself might have been an efficient painter as he is called as *Citrakarappuli* in his inscriptions.[58]

Every ruling monarch of ancient period had encouraged the art of painting. But we are not able to find out who was the patron for a particular painting. King's unbound interest in painting had been traditionally maintained even upto the period of Sethupathi Kings, who ruled in the latter part of 18th century.

There are a number of valuable paintings in the palace of Ramanathapuram. In one painting a palm leaf containing a painting is left unfinished by the side of the king and queen. This suggests that either the king or the queen could have been artist who drew the painting found on the palm leaf.[59]

The artist's signature in the painting is found at Kuricci in Tanjore District. These paintings are assignable to the 18th century. There the figure of artist in prostration before the God and his signature in Tamil character are also found painted.[60]

All these artisans had to pay some professional taxes such as *tattarappattam*[61] *tattirai*[62] *tattoli*[63] by tattar, *taccattalom*[64] *by taccar*, etc. There is also a tax term called *tapati arici*[65] which may denote the dues collected from stapatis.

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2. Maduraikkanchi-516, 519.
3. Silambu, 1, 5, 28, 31.
4. Siraikkottamarakkottamakkiya kadai II 107-110

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9. Ibid. 390.
10. Ibid. 396.
11. *Kasakkudi copper-plates* Slokam 34, i. 136.
12. *Velurppalayam copper-plates* Slokam 31.
13. *Pattathalmangalam copper-plates* P.S.M. p. 248.
14. *Bahur copper-plates,* verses 32, *Pallavar Seppedukal Muppatu* , p. 276.
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16. V. Ganapati Stapati, An interesting inscription from Uttiramerur, *Seminar on inscriptions*, p. 179.
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18. Dr. R. Nagaswamy, *Chengai Mavatta Varalarru Karutharangu*, p. 89.
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20. *Sinnamanur copper-plates* (Small) 1.38. *Sivaramangalam copper plates*, 11. pp. 91-93.
21. *Tiruppurappu copper-plates*, 11. pp. 8-9.
22. *Dalavaypuram copper-plates*, 11. pp. 214-224.
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30. S. Rajagopal, Department of Archaeology copied this inscription from the original.
31. S.I.I. Vol. VIII, No. 510.
32. S.I.I. Vol. VII. No. 1041.
33. S.I.I. Vol. V. No. 991.
34. Ibid. No. 515.
35. S.I.I. Vol. VI. No. 438.
36. Ibid
37. S.I.I. V. No. 515.
38. Ibid. No. 983.
39. S.I.I. Vol. VII, No. 41.
40. S.I.I. Vol. V, No. 657.
41. S.I.I. Vol. VII No. 412, S.I.I. Vol. V. 642.

42. S.I.I. Vol. III, No. 35.
43. S.I.I. Vol. VIII, No. 226.
44. S.I.I. Vol. VI, No. 439.
45. A.R.E. 151 of 1905.
46. A.R.E. 186 of 1910.
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61. S.I.I. Vol. XIX, No. 414; Vol. V. No. 1375, Vol. III, No. 151.
62. S.I.I. Vol. XIII, No. 309, Vol. VIII, No. 324, Vol. IV, 381.
63. S.I.I. Vol. II, No. 22.
64. S.I.I. Vol. XVII, No. 143.
65. S.I.I. Vol. I. No. 64.

# 3

## Exquisite Panel Sculptures of Tamilnadu

The art of manufacturing sculptures, bronzes, wood carvings and ivory carvings had its origin from paintings. In recent years a considerable number of paintings of pre-historic as well as historic period have been discovered in Tamilnadu. Hence it is obvious that this technique might have given birth to a number of new techniques such as carvings on stone, manufacturing sculptures in round, and producing beautiful bronze images etc.

Earliest reference about an image on stone comes from Sangam literature.[1] This image known as 'Kollippavai' appears to have been carved as bas-relief on Kolli hills. The other images mentioned in Sangam literature may have been made of either stucco or wood.[2] The figures of the heroes found portrayed as bas-relief on the hero-stones of Irulappatti[3] are assignable to fourth - fifth century A. D.

Coming to Pallava period we come across large number of panel sculptures of both secular and religious nature. The panel sculpture portrayed in animated movements and embedded on the walls of Thantonrisvarar temple at Kanchipuram[4] are the best examples in respect of secular nature. These figures are carved as if dancing in pairs holding a piece of cloth and balls or bags made probably of leather. Stylistically these panels recall the intrinsic sculptures of Amaravathi and Nagarjunakonda, and are assignable to fifth - sixth century A.D.

With regard to religious nature, the small panels hardly measuring about 30 cm. in length and 20 cm. in height found from Munnur, Manimangalam, Tenneri, Madurantakam, Uttaramerur, Ukkal, Brahmadesam and Velancheri are to be first mentioned.[5] Surprisingly these panels are found only in Tondaimandalam region. Generally the figures of Brahma, Linga, Parvathi, Subrahmanya, Narasimha, Lakshmi are found portrayed in sitting postures. In some panels these are added with probably some devotees in standing posture. In these panels Brahma is shown with four heads. Siva, in anthropomorphic form i.e., phalus, Parvathi by the side of Siva, Narasimha with half animal and half human form and Lakshmi as Srivatsa in half human and half symbolic form. It is believed that the occurrence of these sculptures shows the harmonious religious life

of the people for they adored Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Parvati and Subrahmanya with equal devotion. The Pallava kings of seventh - eighth centuries A.D. seem to have given equal place to all sects of Hinduism. They even went to the extent of assuming epithets of Parama Maheswara, Parama Brahmanya and Parama Bhagavatha and Parama Bhattaraka all put together.

The prevalence of harmonious trend in religion among people is evident from an outstanding panel sculpture also spotted recently at Thiruvamattur by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology.[6] This panel bearing the figures of Brahma, Siva in its anthropomorphic form and Vishnu depicts the equal position held by the above Gods in those days. It clearly exhibits further that there was no heterogeneous feeling between Saivites and Vaishnavites of those period. This religious unity must have been necessitated due to the strong intrusion of Jainism and Buddhism in post Sangam period. The impact of these religions was felt upto eighth century A.D. in south Tamilnadu i.e. Pandinadu. That Buddhism and Jainism had held dominant position in Tondaimandalam during fifth century A. D. is evident from the fact of the role played by Kanchi as strongest centre of Buddhism and Tiruppatirippuliyur as the centre of Janism. The panel sculptures of Tirthankaras found on the hill of Tirunatharkunru near Gingee affirms the strong holding of Jainism among people.[7]

The Jains who were in seclusion during Pre-Sangam period seem to have mingled with the people and occupied supreme position by converting a considerable number of population in Post-Sangam period. This might have caused the majority of population to uprise and follow the cult of 'Trinity'.

With the downfall of the Jainism and the Buddhism in Tondaimandalam, the philosophy of Trinity began to decline and two major divisions in Hinduism had unnecessarily arisen. To strengthen the Hinduism and to bring the entire population in one fold the rulers had to popularise the stories of Mahabharatam, Ramayanam, Bhagavatam and Kandapuranam among the people.

It is understood from the copper plate of Paramesvaravarman I, that special arrangements were made to read and explain the story of Mahabharatam during night time.[8] The copper plates of Pandya king Rajasimhan also mention the translation of Mahabharatam into Tamil that was caused to be made by one of his predecessors.[9]

The magnificent panel carved on the slope of a hillock at Mamallapuram narrates the final stage of Kiratarjuniam. The core theme of this panel is the offering of Pasupataastram to Arjuna by Lord Siva.[10]

This memorable event was witnessed by the living beings of all the three world *viz.* heaven, earth and Patala loga (underground world). The artist had brought all beings in carving. Celestial beings are carved in flying movements, while the earthly beings are shown doing their day-to-day activities. The king aud queen of underground world are shown emerging out from their shelter. To pacify the feelings of Vishnavites, God Narayana is depicted in a small shrine near Lord Siva. This panel appears to delineate the emergence of Siva's superiority among the three gods.

This panel and the panels of Mahishasuramardhani mandapa seem to have been carved to popularise the legends narrated in Puranas. For the narration of the succession of kings in Pallava geneology, one has to go to Vaikunta Perumal Temple at Kanchipuram.[11] The inner side of the wall of the first circumbulatory courtyard bears the panels which delineate the succession of kings of Pallava line from their mythical origin.

When Saivism had established its superior position in Tamilnadu the kings and sculptors seem to have chosen the subjects from Puranas connected with Saivism and the stories of Saiva saints (Nayanmars).

The temples built during later Pallavas and early Cholas bear usually the friezes of Yali and Bhutaganas and small panels narrating the story of Ramayanam. Among the Bhutaganas, in few temples, there are some sculptures, depicting the story of Kannappa Nayanar.[12] In the Bhutavari of Siva temple at Ulagapuram, the story of Sundarar's journey to Kayilayam with Cheraman Perumal Nayanar is found carved.[13] During later Pallava and early Chola period it seems that Saivism had attained supreme position annexing Vaishnava sect in its fold. That would be the reason to see the figure of Vishnu in the nich of western wall of the Garbhagrha and the Ramayana panel sculptures in the Kandam portion of Adhishtana of Siva temples of these period.[14]

On the adhishtana of the Rajarajan Tiruvayil (Gopura of the first prakara) of Rajarajesvaram, Thanjavur there are some interesting panel sculptures depicting the stories of Lord Muruga's marriage with Valli. Kiratarjuniam and Kamadahanam on the left side and Markandeya's story and Siva's marriage with Parvathi on the right side.[15] Some exquisite panel sculptures are also seen on the walls of the south and north balustrades of Ardhamandapa of the same temple. Of them two panels appear to belong rather earlier than Rajaraja's time on stylistic ground.

The panel sculptures narrating the stories of Saiva saints are available at Rudrapathi temple of Kilakadambur and at Rajarajesvaram temple of Darasuram. These panels have the label inscriptions also on the base denoting the Saiva saint.[16]

One later pandya temple of Sinddhaiyankottai of Quaid-E-Milleth District also bear some panel sculptures of Saiva saints, but without label inscriptions.[17]

The story of Siruttonda Nayanar is carved in detail on the base of a mandapa of Vijayanagar period, on the western bank of the temple tank of Ekambaresvarar temple, at Kanchipuram.

After the popularity of the 'sacred plays' of Lord (Tiruvilaiyadal) Siva among people, it seems that the sculptors had preferred to bring the stories of these sacred plays into carvings. Two such carvings depicting the stories of 'Pittukku Man Sumanta Padalam' and 'Panrikkuppal Kodutta Padalam' are found carved on the inner side of the walls of the Gopura of Tiruppalaivanam in Thanjavur District.

Thus the theme of the panel sculptures had been often changing according to the social reformation of the society. Hence they are the authentic source materials for reconstructing the social and religious history of Tamilnadu.

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6. *Kalvettu* Quarterly Journal of Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology Vol. 25 p. 5
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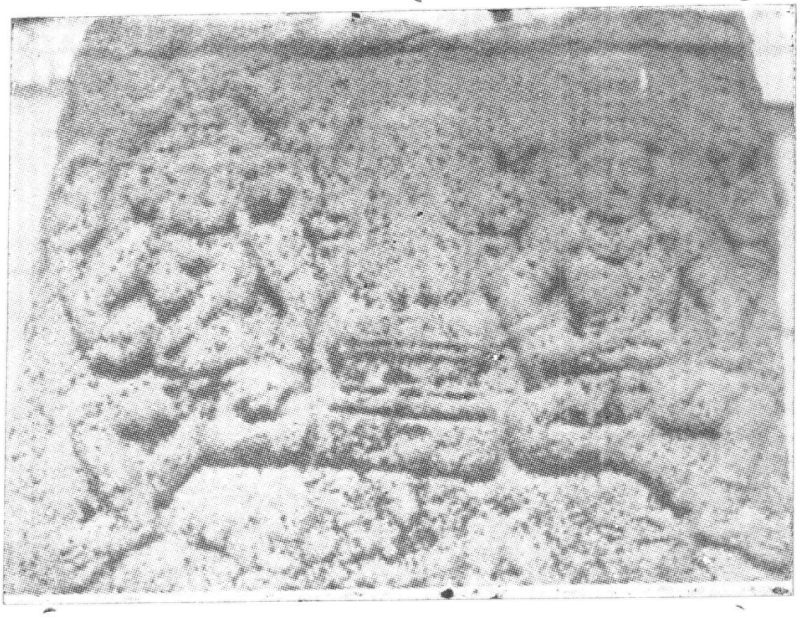
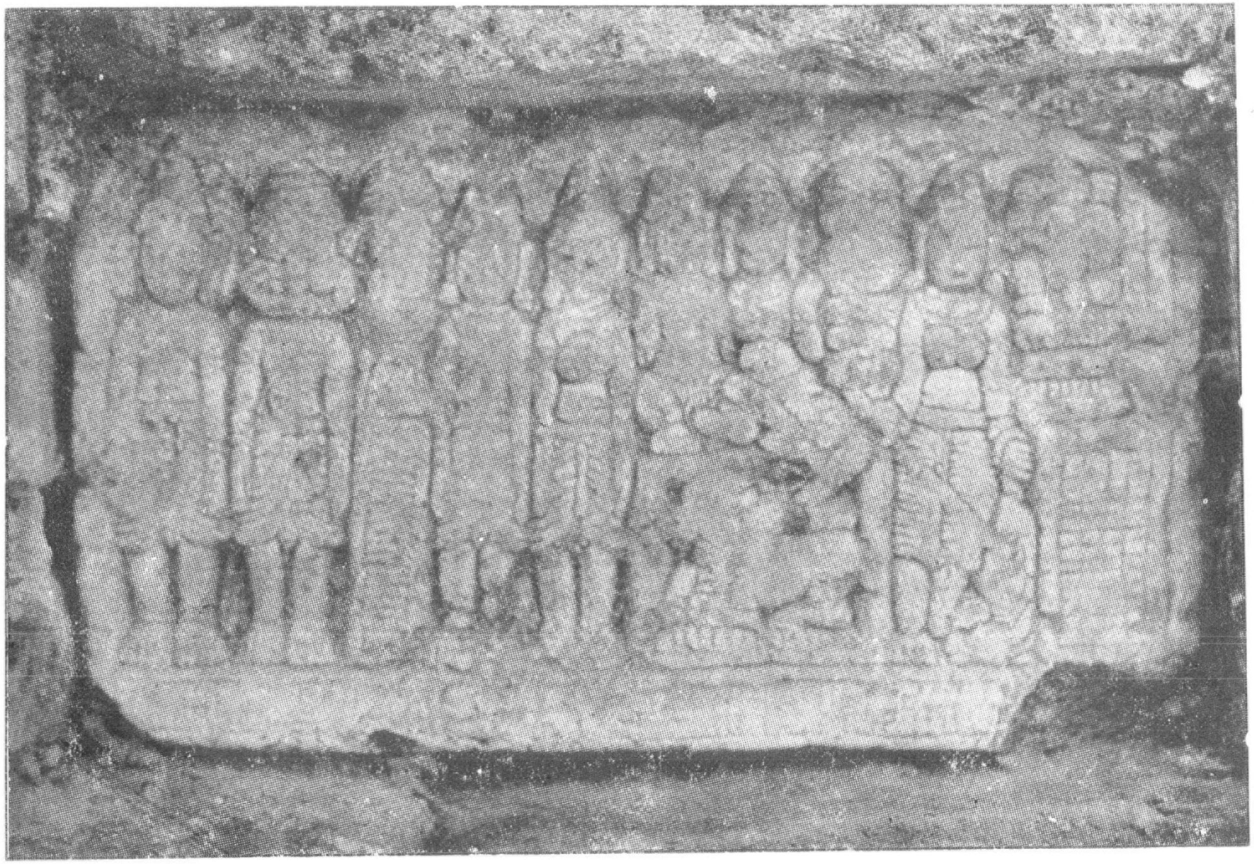


Trimurthy, Panel Sculpture, Early Pallava period, 6th century A.D.
Tiruvamattur, South Arcot District.



Panel Sculpture 6-7th century A.D., Anur, Chengai M.G.R. District. Courtesy, Thiru. K. Sridharan Registering Officer, Trichy

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# 4

# Pre-historic Paintings in Tamilnadu

## Classification of Paintings

The paintings available in India are classified as Pre-historic and Historic. The paintings datable to the Mesolithic age are the oldest in India. The paintings drawn in the Chalcolithic and Neolithic periods all come under the classification of pre-historic paintings. Paintings from the Megalithic period are called historic paintings.

## Discovery of Pre-historic paintings

It was in 1867, that some pre-historic paintings were discovered by Carlleyle on some rocks.[1] But an analytical study was done on pre-historic paintings only in 1883 by Ceckburn.[2] F. Fawcett was the first scholar who wrote a scholarly article on the paintings found on the rock cut cave of Edakkal in Kerala.[3] Following this, many archaeologists and historians had written articles on pre-historic paintings found in different places. In 1957 V. S. Wakankar made a historic finding of pre-historic paintings on the rocks of Bimbetka in the Reiner district of Madhya pradesh.[4]

## Study of Pre-historic paintings

Obviously this discovery should have induced scholars to pay full attention to pre-historic paintings on scientific basis. Percy Brown was the first renowned author who spared somep ages in a book of his for pre-historic paintings.[5] Subsequently Birdget and Raymond Allchin had written a separate chapter on pre-historic paintings in their valuable book "The Birth of Indian Civilization".[6] In recent years Dr. Mathpal had done a detailed research on Bimbetka paintings and got his Ph.D. Degree.[7]

## Paintings in South India

As regards South India, paintings have been discovered datable fıom the Neolithic period. It is believed that the paintings found near Badami in the Deccan and the drawings found in Edakkal cave are assignable to that age.[8]

**Mallappadi Paintings**

The first discovery of pre-historic paintings was made in Tamilnadu by the Archaeological Department of Madras University in 1980 on a rock of Mallappadi in Dharmapuri District.[9] A man seated on a horse aims a spear at another. The picture is drawn in white pigment on the outer surface of the rock. Excavations near this rock yielded some neolithic celts and megalithic deposits. So this painting is ascribed to Megalithic age by Dr. K. V. Raman.[10]

**Kilvalai Paintings**

There is a small rock called Rattapparai (Blood rock) in a tiny village Kilvalai, in South Arcot district. On information gathered from a co-passenger in a bus a school teacher explored this area and he was able to locate paintings drawn in red ochre on this Rattapparai.[11] Other scholars also confirmed that these are real old paintings assignable to 1000 to 500 B.C.

The paintings at Kilvalai can be divided into four groups. The first group consists of three persons. One man is seated on a horse. Another is pulling that horse with a rope tied on the neck of the horse while the third man is shown with stretched hands as if he welcomes the others. The noses of these three persons are like the beak of bird. The central person is drawn with a crown on his head. The person who is seated on the horse and the person who is leading the horse are shown with daggers at their waists. The presence of the dagger helps to determine the date of these paintings to the iron age i.e. around 1000 B.C.

In the second group four persons are depicted standing on a boat and holding hands with one another. One of them is seen carrying a long pole which indicates that he is the head of the crew of the boat. The nose of these persons also is similar to a bird's beak. What one could understand from this scene is that they were practising sailing on a boat in a river and the art of fishing.

The third group is the most interesting, It consists of some symbols. There are five symbols. The first looks like a thatch, the second like a mattala (drum), the third as a comb, the fourth again as a mattala while the fifth is a circle with cross lines. These are drawn in a straight line. One could find similar symbols in Harappan script. So some scholars believe that these paintings represent the developed from of Harappan symbols and seem to belong to late Harappan period.

The fourth group is painted on the other side of the rock where six persons are drawn standing in a row.

An axe of the Neolithic age and a few black and red ware sherds were collected near this rock. These findings confirm the date of this painting to the transitional period from the Neolithic period i.e. around 1000 B.C.

### Settavarai Paintings

The Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has located some distinctive pre-historic paintings at Settavarai which is about 15 km. west of Kilvalai near Vettavalam in South Arcot District.[12] The paintings are drawn on the rock surface of a natural cavern of Ayyanar hill of Settavarai.

In this painting the drawings of animals are prominent. Especially a deer and a fish are depicted in big size. The outlines of these two figures are drawn in red ochre, while the inner portion is painted white. The figure of a buffalo is drawn completely in red. The front half of an another buffalo is drawn in thick ochre while the back half is painted showing the bones and other inner organs. There are also figures of a tiger and wild bear.

One significant scene is found in front of the deer. A small amount of flesh is found fried in the fire with the help of long pole. This scene confirms that the authors of these paintings were well aware of eating fried flesh and fish.

Only one human figure is found in this large scene of animals. His nose is also in the same style of the Kilvalai man, but he is found without a dagger. On the basis of the execution of the painting and the style of the figures one can easily assign a date earlier than the Kilvalai paintings i.e. around 1500 B.C.

### Vettaikkaran hill Paintings

The Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has located pre-historic paintings for the first time in Coimbatore District in Vettaikkaran hill near Vellerukkampalayam.[13] The paintings are found in natural cavern about 2500 metres above the sea level. They are all painted in white. Animals such as elephants, deer and horses and human figures are found in groups. The occurrence of elephant is significant since so far no elephant figure is found in the paintings of Mallappadi, Kilvalai and Settavarai. It is solid proof for the prevalence of elephants in large number in the Chera country which included Coimbatore District. There is one person seated on an elephant, another seated on a horse aiming a lance.

On the other side six human figures are seen dancing in a group by holding hands. This scene suggests that these people had begun to live a communal life. So these paintings may belong to a period just prior to the historical period.

**Masinakkudi Paintings**

In Nilgiri District also pre-historic paintings in white pigment are noticed.[14] These are more or less similar to the Vettaikkaran malai paintings, but seem to have been drawn in still later period.

Some peculiar figures are seen in this painting such as human figures seated on an elephant, on a tiger, on a deer and on a peacock. These figures tempt one to identify them as the figures of Gods viz. Indra or Ayyanar, Ayyappan or Ayyanar, Vayu the God of wind, Subramanyar with his consorts respectively. Therefore these paintings seem to have been drawn in the historical period i.e. arround 3rd Century B.C,

**Alampadi Paintings**

Recently some pre-historic paintings have been discovered at Alampadi, Padiyandal and Kollur in South Arcot district and Maharajakkadai and Mallasamudram in Dharmapuri District.[15] The paintings of Alampadi are executed in red ochre depicting a cow and its calf, deer, wild bear etc. The intestine of the cow are shown. This system of drawing is seen in the paintings found at Chaturpet Nattallah which are believed to have been drawn in the chalcolithic age.[16] At Chatkunda three antelopes are drawn with the inner parts of their body. These are dated to the historical period. At Settavarai also there is one buffalo painting showing the inner parts of its body.[17] On the basis of its execution, colour combination and comparison with other paintings of similar nature, the Alampadi paintings may be dated to the Chalcolithic period.

The paintings at Padiyandal are drawn in white. A horse and a human figure seated on an unidentified animal, holding a long pole are the prominent figures. These appear to belong to the historical period.

In Kollur some geometrical designs are drawn in red ochre. No human or animal figure is seen in the group. By the side of this site a few Neolithic celts were collected. These give a clue to date this painting to the closing era of the Neolithic period.

**Maharajakkadai Paintings**

The Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has discovered for the first time pre-historic paintings on the slabs of dolmens at Maharajakkadai, in Krishnagiri district.[18] The paintings in white include figures of a bird, an archer, a cavalier and a man holding a raised pole.

Of deep interest is the painting of a male figure with an arch over his head and body shown upto the hip. Rays emanate from the arch. This seems to be figure of divinity with the 'jwala prabha'. If this identification is accepted, this figure would be the earliest of a deity found in Tamilnadu. All the paintings are drawn in white. Since these are painted on dolmens, these can be easily dated to the megalithic period.

Also noticed there is an archaic Tamil (Tamil Brahmi) inscription painted on a rock in a natural, but inaccessible cavern very near to these dolmens. The inscription is unique since it is painted and not ungraved. It refers to a gift made by some individuals. This is the first painted inscription so far found in Tamilnadu and it could be assigned to a date not later than 3rd century B.C.[19]

**Mallasumudram Paintings**

In another place called Mallasamudram in the same district, some interesting paintings of pre-historic age were noticed by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology.[20] These are also drawn in white on dolmens. Among the figures found in these paintings a cavaller, an unusual animal with hair raised and human figure decorated with a richly decked crown are of great interest. The human figure with headgear could be identified with a headman suggesting that these people had begun to lead a communal life.

There are some graffity such as tree in railing, a drum-like figure, a Tulasi plant in a pedestal which appear very similar to the Harapan script. These graffiti seem to indicate that post Harapan culture had prevailed in Tamilnadu also.

**Cirumalai Paintings**

This kind of pre-historic paintings have been discovered in Madurai District also by Madurai University.[21] These paintings are in natural cavern in Cirumalai hills near Dindigal. The cave is about 10M x 13M and the paintings are drawn on the walls of the cave. Two colours white and red ochre used for drawing the paintings. While red is used mainly as background or outline, white is used for covering the other parts of the figures.

This painting depict several scenes like huntihg, animal fight, men in combat and a scene of religious ritual. One human figure is identified with a chief priest or king who is drawn in a sitting posture with all necessary paraphernalia around him. The holy or royal status is suggested by a halo (or crown) around his head. By the side of this figure there is another figure with halo, probably a junior priest. He is drawn

as if he is preparing for an animal sacrifice. Both these figures are seen holding a sickle-like weapon in their left hand. They are depicted as wearing cross bands on their chests like the Sannavira to show that they are warriors.

Dr. Vijayavenugopal classifies three types of human figures in these paintings (i) those with a halo around their heads (ii) those who do not have it and (iii) those who have conical faces which look like triangles in side view.[22]

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13. Ibid.
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16. Erwin Neumayer, *Prehistoric Indian Rock Paintings*, p. 148
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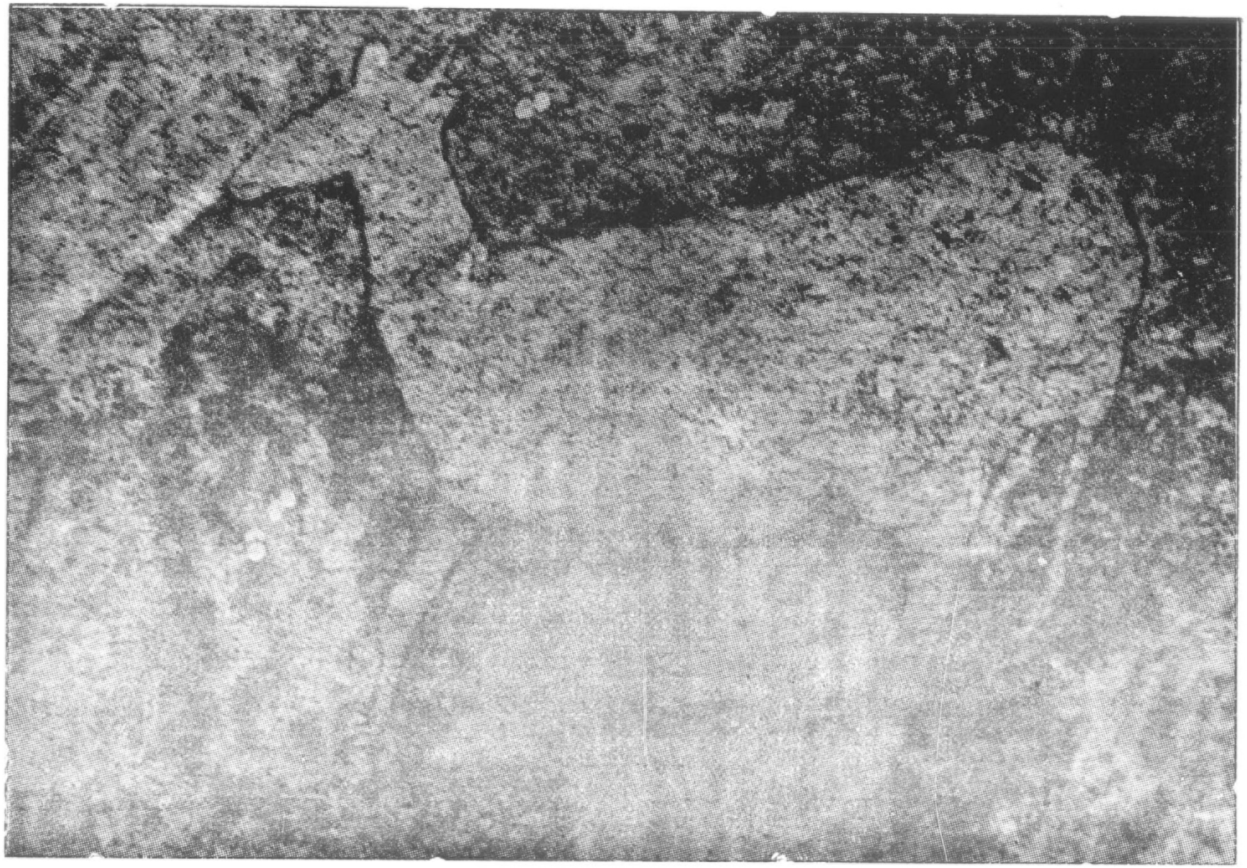


A deer, Pre-Historic Painting, Sethavarai, Thiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar District

A Horse-rider, led by two persons, Pre-Historic Painting, Keezhvalai, South Arcot District

# 5

# Krishnapuram - Treasure House of Nayak Art

A lofty tower drawing the attention of tourists travelling from Tirunelveli to Tiruchendur, on the northern side of the road, at the ninth km. from Tirunelveli is the eastern gateway of the Venkatachalapathi temple of Krishnapuram. This village was established by Krishnappa Nayaka, the Madurai ruler in the 16th century A.D. Having the main entrance at the eastern side, the Garbhagrha, the ardhamantapa and mahamandapa of this temple are surrounded by an inner prakara. In front of the mahamantapa there is a pillared mantapa which is known as the Unjal mantapa. This mandapa consists of fourteen large pillars, built seven on each side. Out of these fourteen pillars, six have colossal sculptures, which are the typical examples of the Nayak style, eight have the rampant Yali.

The second pillar of the left side row, if one enters through the entrance of the unjal mandapa, bears the figure of Virabhadra, which is sculptured elegantly, with detailed anatomic features. Standing on his left leg, crossed the right, he holds a long sword in his right hand and a shield in rectangular shape in the left hand. On the right side of the figure is a portrait, probably of the founder, Krishnappa Nayakkar himself, holding cymbals in both hands, in the style of singing the glory of Lord Venkatachalapathy. The crown and the garments worn by him obviously indicate that he is a royal personage.

A musician carrying the Vangiyam on his left shoulder, carved to the left of Virabhadra, has a long moustache flowing downward. It appears as if he is enchanted by the melodious songs of the king.

The fourth pillar bears the figure of Manmatha holding a sugarcane bow in his left hand and a flower arrow in his right. His moustache is in the style of a flying bird spreading its wings on both sides. The sugarcane is carved with elaborate details giving prominence to each and every part of it. On the right side of Manmatha is a damsel bearing the umbrella and on the left is another damsel giving the flower arrow one by one to Manmatha, to aim at Rathi.

The terrible scene of the Bhima and Purushamrgam fight is carved on the sixth pillar. Bhima is shown with a gada raised aloft by his right

hand, while his left hand is placed on the thigh of his left leg. Purushamrgam is seen holding the waist of the Bhima by its left hand, while its right hand holds a big gada. On the left side of Bhima is Dharma, in a standing posture, having his right hand in the suchi mudra.

The ninth pillar bears the beautiful figure of an apsara in the chatura dance pose, having her right hand in the suchi mudra. Patrakundalams are found decorating her ears. A crown of flowers in the kathakali style adorns her head.

Right of her is carved a man who is identified as a hermit, but it seems that he may be an eunuch who is usually associated with dancing girls. His face is sculptured as if he has applied make-up to suit to dance with her. His teeth are shown as if he is in great joy. He is wearing a full hand open shirt as the upper garment and dhoti at the waist, which extends upto the feet. A club is in his right hand, while a parrot is in his left hand. His hair dressing is in the style of the "ushinsha".

Left of the apsara is an attendant holding a thambura in her right hand. Her hair dressing reminds one of the kodali kondai (axe-like hair dressing) mentioned in literature.

Rathi is carved on the eleventh pillar which is right opposite to the Manmatha pillar. She is seen seated on her mount swan with her left leg bent on the mount, while her right leg is kept hanging. A mirror is held in her left hand and a flower is in her right. A hole pierced in the nose for wearing the nose ornament, is an attraction to visitors. On both sides of Rathi attendants are waiting, one bearing a kumkum casket, another expecting an order from her mistress.

The fourteenth pillar bears a male figure who is identified with the attendant of Virabhadra, but he is probably Arjuna. This figure is standing in a peculiar style, having his both legs turned to left. A bow is held in his left hand, while a sword is in his right. The moustache is shown swooping downward.

Right of him is a female figure offering fruit to a parrot. There is another interesting figure of an old man trying to undress a lady. He is shown as hunchbacked, white haired, almost teethless bearded, not realising that his dhoti has fallen down from his waist, but having the instinct of enjoying a young lady. By sculpturing these figures, the sculptor might have thought of causioning the public that age is not a negative criterion for falling in love with a young lady.

The kanta portion between the ceiling and the podikai of pillars is carved with a number of bas-reliefs which run around. The three primordial forms of Vishnu in the standing, sitting and reclining postures, some of the forms of his avatara, Vaishnava saints viz. Nammalvar, Udaiyavar and Mathurakavi are the dominant figures on these panels. Totally there are 64 panels, containing different groups of figures. Of them, the panels of Vishnu with Sridevi and Bhudevi are 29, while Trivikrama with Sridevi and Bhudevi is only one. The panels of Vishnu in the reclining posture are 21. They are in two different styles. In four panels of the reclining posture, the head of Vishnu is rested on the right hand, in the other 17 panels the right hand is just spread out on the right side of his head. There are seven panels in which Vishnu is in a sitting posture. Of them five are without Adisesha and two are with him. One panel consists of Nammalvar, Madurakavi and Udaiyavar and another panel represents Krishna with Bhama and Rukmani.

The processional images made of Panchaloha are kept in the mahamantapa. All of them seem to have been made during the 16th century. Most probably they were donated by Krishnappa Nayak himself. The Garuda vahana, made of copper, and a pedestal for alankara, made of a single granite stone, are worth seeing.

Gaining entry into the ardhamantapa, one can have peaceful dharshan of Venkatachalapathy and His consorts in the Garbhagriha. On the external sides of the walls of the Garbhagriha and the antharala there is no sculpture to niches, but there are bas-reliefs of Narthana Krishna above the niche of the antarala on the southern side, Narasimha in a sitting posture above the niche of the Garbhagriha on the western side and a seated Brahma above the niche of the same on the northern side. The stone sculptures of twelve Vaishnava saints and Senaimudali are housed in the Thiruccurrumaligai on the northern side.

The shrines of Alarmelumangai and Padmavathi Thayar are situated on the southern side and on the northern side respectively in the outer prakara. Both the shrines are fronted with pillared mantapas. These mantapas appear to have been built late in the 17th century.

North of the flag mantapa there is another mantapa called Veerappa Nayakan Mantapa with exquisitely carved sculptures. These sculptures are also in the true Nayak style and are comparable with the sculptures found in the thousand pillared mantapa of Minakshi Amman-temple at Madurai.

The front row pillars bear colossal sculptures, while the inner rows have yalis and a few small sculptures. One could see Bhulogarambai,

a male Gypsy, Karnan, Arjuna, a female Gypsy carved prominently with detailed anatomic features on the front pillars. If one returns after having dharshan of the Mula Vigraha, one can first see Bhuloga Rambai, the danseuse of the Devas, sculptured in a rhythmic style. She is shown with a bouquet in her right hand and a kumkum casket or something close in her left hand. The hair style of the kathakali form reveals the influence of Malainadu.

On her left is a hunter with a bow and arrow. On her right there is a love scene similar to the one found on a pillar in the Unjalmantapa. In this scene the young lady is also in the extreme stage of love with the old man. Both are in a stage of love, not knowing that their dresses have fallen down from their waists.

The next pillar bears the figure of a well built Gypsy, carrying a young lady on his broad shoulders. He is shown wearing only a lower garment and standing in a starting position, suggesting the weight he is carrying on his shoulder. As he is in a slanting position, towards the right, his left side stomach bones are prominently seen. This attest to the fact that these sculptures have been produced by master craftsmen.

It is said that the young lady, seated on the shoulders of the gypsy is a princess. Covering her head with the end of her saree, she is wearing a number of ornaments. This shows that the Nayak sculptor was able enough to create all forms of human life in stones.

Left of this gypsy is a horse rider who is shown pulling up the reins of the horse, by his right hand in order to stop, hence the horse slips raising the forelegs upward. His left arm aims a javelin at the gypsy. Right of the gypsy is another horse rider wearing iron armour. The back side of the pillar is carved in the shape of a tree on which a toddy tapper or somebody else is seen catching a bunch of coconuts or palm fruit.

A small panel representing a snake charmer playing the makudi, (a flute like musical instrument) a hooded snake and a long pole tied with two bamboo boxes forkeeping snakes in, is worth seen.

On the base of the third pillar, another interesting scene is seen, wherein a gypsy holding a long stick in his right hand and carrying a monkey on his right shoulder is sculpted.

The fifth pillar carries the figures of a female gypsy carrying a prince on her shoulders. Left of this gypsy a fortune teller and a princess are carved. There is a legend around these figures. As the prince was being carried away by a gypsy, the princess, who fell in love with him ask a

fortune teller, whether she could again meet her sweetheart. All these figures have been delicately carved with artistic perfection.

The kanta portion between the ceiling and the podikai of the pillars of the Muthuveerappan mantapa also contains a number of panel sculptures, as in the Unjalmantapa. Of them a few are interesting. They depict the fight of Rama and Ravana, the dance of Virabhadra, the dance of Garudalvar, the dance of trumpeters and the dance of young girls with small sticks (kolattam).

There are two inscriptions. One is engraved on the wall right of the entrance into the central shrine and the other on the wall left of the same entrance. The latter inscription, recorded in Saka 1485, corresponding to 1563 A.D. the earlier of the two, records the gift of villages of Ariyakulam, Puttaneri of Tiruvengadanallur, Pottaikulam, Kadikulam, Kuttukkal, Siramankulam and some land in Alakkudi to the temple of Tiruvenkadanathadeva by Krishnappa Nayaka who was the son and successor of Visvanatha Nayaka, the founder of the Nayak dynasty of Madura.[1]

The other inscription, dated in Saka 1499 i.e. 1577 A.D. records a gift of Virappa Nayaka for the merit of his father Krishnappa Nayaka who ruled from 1563 to 1573 A.D., to the temple of Thiruvenkatanathadeva, at Krishnapuram.[2]

There is also a copper plate issued by Sadasivaraya, the Vijayanagar king, in Saka 1489, corresponding to 1567 A.D. stating that at the request of Krishnappa Nayak of Madurai Sadasivaraya granted a number of villages to the Thiruvenkatanatha temple at Krishnapuram which was established by the same Nayak.[3]

From the above three records, the following points are clear: 1) Krishnapuram was set up by Krishnappa Nayaka in the year 1563. 2) He donated a number of villages to the same temple. 3) His son Muthuvirappa Nayaka also made gifts to this village for the merit of his father Krishnappa Nayak. 4) Sadasivaraya, the overlord, also granted a number of villages at the request of his subordinate. 5) The present Venkatachalapathy the main deiiy was called Thiruvenkatanathadeva, at the time of the installation of the image and the mantapa north of the flag staff is called the Muthuvirappan Mantapam ofter Muthuvirappa Nayaka, the son of Krishnappa Nayaka.

Both father and son seem to have paid their personal attention to the welfare and enrichment in art of this temple. So it enjoys a supreme place in the treasures of Nayak art.

1. ARE for 1912, No. 17
2. Ibid. No. 16
3. Epi. Indica Vol. IX, pp. 328-42; A Topographical List of the Inscriptlons of the Madras Presidency, Vol. III, No. 407A, (Pub. 1919)

# 6

## Late Nayak Paintings in Tiruchi District

Kongu country is still not a forgotten region, for, it is now being explored intensively searching for the authentic evidences for reconstructing the history of this part of Tamil Nadu. The extensive exploration carried out by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology has revealed some interesting pre-historic paintings drawn on the hillocks near Coimbatore in Coimbatore district and Kunnur in Nilgiris district. Recently the Tamil University, Thanjavur has conducted excavations at Kodumanal and brought to light some significant facts for deciding the social and religious life of the people of Kongu country.

During the village wise survey carried out by the Curator of Karur museum[1] for collection of antiquities, he was able to locate some typical Late Nayak paintings at Muthalamman temple, Kodangippatti, near Karur in Trichy district.

Kodangippatti, a small village lies on the road between Karur and Isanattam, about 10km. south of Karur. Muthalamman temple of this village seems to have been built about 200 years ago. The temple structure is built of stone upto prastara and brick and mortar upto sikhara consisting of a mukhamantapa in front of Garbhagriha. The walls of this Mukhamantapa bear the excellent paintings depicting ten avatars of Vishnu, the stories of Kannappar, Markkandeya and Bhikshatana.

These paintings appear to have been drawn as soon as the constrution of the temple was over. On stylistic ground these paintings seem to belong to latter half of 19th century. This presumption is attested by the presence of the drawings of foreign officers on horse back, found in one panel of these paintings. Furher in support of this presumption we may site the date of seizure of Karur fort by Europeans held in the year 1863 A.D.[2] One can safely come to the conclusion that these paintings may have been drawn after the arrival of Europeans to Karur.

Now to the details of the paintings. On entering into the mukhamantapa, one can see paintings on all sides of the mantapa. If one goes on pradakshana, the first painting to come to notice on the

east wall is the figure of a foreign officer accompanied with a sepoy in front and a servant behind. The officer and the sepoy are on horseback while the servant is on foot. By the side of each horse there is a dog. Both the horses and the dogs are shown in the state of running.

The foreign officer is seen wearing pant and coat with hat on his head and shoes on feet. His face is drawn elegantly showing all details in their lines. The dress of the sepoy is shown in Indian style wearing pyjama as his lower garment and kurtha as upper garment. It seems that he is shown wearing turban on his head as the upper part of the sepoy is withered. Both the horses are in gallopping style. The horse of the officer appears to be younger than the horse of the sepoy. The servant behind the horse of the officer is seen walking with folded hands, carrying something on nis back. He is drawn in typical south Indian style. On the Kantam portion of the South wall the scenes of Nandagopala, playing flute, with cows, Krishna as Govardhanadhari, Maya Krishna with gopies, Gajendranugraham, Rama, Lakshmana with Sita in the forest and a flock of animals are drawn in panels which are clearly divided by the drawing of pillars.

Nandagopal is shown playing the flute with his two hands, leaning himself on a cow. The cow which is bearing the weight of Krishna and the other cows stand beside are seem to have been enchanted by the sweet music as they stand facing towards Gopala.

The scene of Govardhanagiri is found next to this. In order to protect the shepherds from the hailstone which was caused by Indra, Krishna is said to have lifted the mountain Govardhana. This legend is drawn in fascinating style. Krishna is shown lifting the mountain with his pointing finger while the mountain is shown with heards of animals, birds and insects.

Next is the scene of Mayakrishna with gopies. Krishna is seen on the top of the tree, having the bundle of sarees of the gopies with him. The uncomfortable gopies, trying to hide their nudity with one of their hands plead to Krishna to return their garments. The arrangement and the execution of this scene make the sightseers to feel pity for the bashful young ladies.

In the scene of Gajendra moksham, Vishnu is drawn in gigantic figure touching the head of the elephant to offer his boon to Gajendra. In a corner of that panel, a small pond is shown wherein the elephant is portrayed being caught by the crocodile.

Next is the obsorbing scene which depicts the most important part of the great epic Ramayana. Maricha disguising himself as a golden deer stands in front of the Parnasalai, where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are staying in the forest. Being attracted by the beauty and colour of the deer, Sita beseeches her husband Rama to catch it for her. Despite entreaties by Lakshmana to Rama not to be misled by the Deer's appearance, Rama yields to Sita's request. The next scene represents the forest with full of wild animals, which is partly connected with the previous scene. The deer is shown running towards the parnasala as if it comes there for want of protection from wild animals like Tiger and Bear.

In the lower layer of the same wall the stories of Kannappar, the Saiva saint and Markandeya and the figures of Ardhanari and Bhikshatana are drawn.

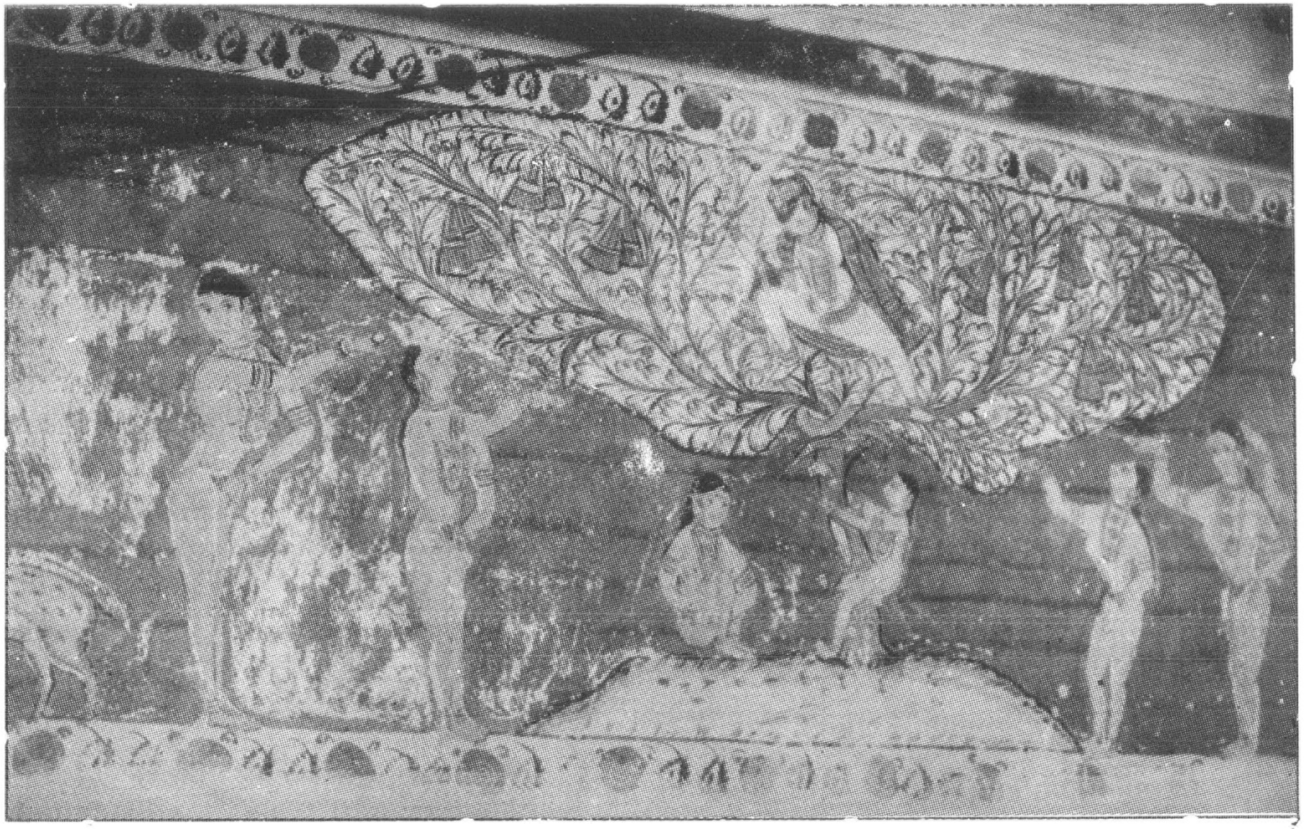
Kannappar, the hunter is shown standing on his left leg while fixing his right toe on the left eye of the Linga. He removes the eye ball of his right eye with the help of an arrow, while the left palm is in the position to get the ball if it falls. His bow is hanging on his left shoulder. Siva's left hand is emerged from the linga and catches hold of the right hand of Kannappar in order to stop him, This act of high emotion due to deep devotion is being witnessed by the priest.

The next panel represents the figure of Ardhanari. This figure is drawn in peculiar form having only two hands, one of Siva and other of Parvathi. Siva'shand is holding a long pole, like Palaniyandi, while Parvathi's hand is held in abayamudra. Right half of the figure represents Siva, and the left half, Parvathi. Even in Prabavali one can see the differencc between Siva's and Parvati's side, Two priests are shown standing with folded hands by the side of each figure.

The figure of Siva as Bhikshatana is interesting since it is drawn in different style. Siva is shown going towards Rishipatnis by begging. Having four hands, right upper hand is holding Trisula which is being held on his shoulder, his right lower hand is bearing the begging bowl, while his left upper hand is holding damaru, his left lower hand is offering leave to the deer. He is being followed by a Butagana who is carrying a big bowl on his head. The Rishipatnis standing in front of Siva are shown in the attitude that they had already been enamoured by the handsomeness of Siva and had lost their conscience, so they do not notice their 'undressing'. Even in that unnatural position they offer something into the Bikshapatra.

The next scene is the well known Markandeya legend. The young Markandeya is shown clinging the Phallus. Yama pulls Markandeya along with Phallus by his noose. At once, Siva emerges

Varagamurthy, Painting, 18th century A.D. Kodangipatty, Trichy District



Krishna with Gopis Painting, (Shepherdesses) 18th century A.D. Kodangipatty, Trichy District

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from the Phallus and drives his Trisula into the stomach of Yama with full force and vigour and kicks him with his left leg. Yama trembles down causing his crown to fall by his side. Two servants of Yama and the buffalo, the mount of Yama, are in a state of fear understanding the danger to them also.

On the North wall in the Kantam portion are ten incarnations (avatars) of Vishnu. They are delineated as found in Vishnu Purana. Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Balarama, Kodandarama, Parasurama, Krishna and Kalki are the ten figures drawn with refined grace of beauty. All are in standing postures, having four hands holding usual weapons. Kalki is identifiable by his horse face.

Next to these ten incarnations, the crawling Krishna is painted. He is shown with two ladies who seem to try to stop him from further crawling.

On Krishna's left, the Panchapandavas are portrayed with folded hands and bowed heads as if they are praying to Krishna. Darumar is seen first with big mustache, next Bhima with Gada, Arjuna in the centre with bow and arrow, Nakula and Sahadeva are without any weapon as fourth and fifth in the row.

In the lower layer of this wall the figures of Vishnu as Anantasayi, Krishna with flute, Siva as Rshabarudar and Subrahmanya with Valli and Deyvanai are drawn.

The subjects of these paintings clearly reveal that an amicable situation prevailed in Tamil Nadu during that period among the people inspite of their inclinations towards different religions.

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1. I am thankful to Thiru Paranan, Curator, Karur Site Museum of the Tamilnadu State Dept. of Archaeology for having placed his notes on these paintings before me.
2. Found on a Tomb at Kodangipatti; also see the picture illustrated in this book.

# 7

# Andipatti Coins - A Re - appraisal

A coin hoard found at Andippatti in Chengam Taluk of North Arcot District made a revolution in the study of coinage in Tamilnadu. These coins are significant in many respects.

Firstly, the metal of the coin. The coins of this age found so far in Tamilnadu were either in copper, silver or gold. This is the only hoard in lead.

Secondly, the early indigenous coins of Tamilnadu bear no legend; except one or two, but they have some punch marks only. But these Andippatti coins have legend on one side.

Thirdly, these coins also follow the traditional style of not bearing the figure of either the King or the tutelar deity unlike the Roman coins which were known to Tamilnadu during that period.

But the most important point about these coins is the legend which has been deciphered and interpreted by eminent scholars like Prof. T.V. Mahalingam, and Dr. R. Nagaswamy. The reading of Professor Mahalingam is as follows:

"Atinan Ethiran Centan"

His interpretation is that this coin was issued by a Sendan and assignable to the 2nd century A.D.[2] Dr. R. Nagaswamy reads the legend as follows:

"Tinnan Ethiran Centan a"

His interpretation is that Centan was an opponent of Tinnan and that "the letter 'a' is a possessive suffix and is a Tamil form of sya (Sanskrit) or sa (Prakrit). That 'a' is a possessive suffix is well known". As examples for this 'a' suffix usage, he quotes the inscription from Minakshipuram (Mankulam) and Alagarkoil. On Paleographical ground he assigns the legend to the 2nd-3rd century A.D. He also agrees that those coins were issued by a Centan and tries to identify him, with some Cendan mentioned in Sangam works.[3]

Of the two interpretations Professor's reading seems to be more plausible. But it also needs some improvement.

His reading of the legend starts from the middle portion of the legend and connects the sentence ignoring the gap and the symbol for full stop.

He views that there are two names of different kings, one is opponent of another.

Dr. Nagaswamy's reading may also slightly be improved.

1. He also reads from the middle portion of the legend and breaks the word.

2. In one place he says that there are three names in the legend Tinnan, Etiran and Centan and in another place, two names Tinnan and Cendan and means Etiran as opponent.[4] It is doubtful if a king would mention the name of his opponent on his coin. On no other coin so far discovered, such custom is found in legend.

Setting against the foregoing background, I intend to make a reappraisal of the reading of the legend and interpretation.

As the legend is written in anti clock wise it may be read as follows;

"Centan Atinnan Etiran" or "Centan Atinna netiran".

In the second reading, the third 'na' in Atinnan is to be combined with vowel 'e' and will become 'ne'.

The meaning of the above reading is Centan Atinnan i.e. Atinnan the son of Centan who has not opposed. It seems that he did not oppose or fight as there was no enemy to him. This reading makes clear to identify the issuer of this coin as Atinnan who may be a ruler of Chengam region.

There are only two names. The two names are not of different kings. They are of one king denoting the name of the son, prefixed with the name of the father as is found in the names of imperial Pandya kings. The Arittappatti inscription is said to have mentioned "Calivan Atanan Voliyan" which has been interpreted by the discoverers as Atanan Voliyan who was the Chieftain under Pandyan overlord.[5] Recently when I happened to see the inscription I was able to read this as follows:

"Cilivan Atinan Voliyan".

This reading actually kindled my conscious to restudy the legend of Andippatti coin, and lent support to believe that there could be a Chieftain having the name Atinan or Atinnan in Chengam region as well like one near Madurai.

As said above Centan Atinnan Etiran means Atinnan, son of Cendan who has not opposed as there was no enemy to him. This tradition of claiming such epithet seems to have continued even in later periods in a different term i.e. Ko ner inmai kondan, one who had no equal; in other words one who cannot be conquered by other kings.

The conclusion is that the legend reads "Centan Atinnan Etiran" which may be interpreted as Atinnan, the son of Centan, who has not opposed since there was no enemy to him. These coins might have been issued by Atinnan or Atinan a Chieftain ruling over Chengam region during second - third century A.D.

Another suggestion may also be made, taking Etiran to mean etirvaruvan one who comes in future i.e. the king designate. In that case the interpretation of the full legend would be Atinnan the king designate was the son of Centan.

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1. The coins are now safely kept in Madras Museum, Egmore.
2. Dr. T.V.Mahalingam, *Presidential Address*, Numismatic Society of India, p. 8.
3. Dr. R.Nagaswamy, *Tamil Coinage - A Study*, p. 141
4. Dr. R.Nagaswamy, *op. cit.* pp. 140-41
5. Dr. K.V.Raman and Y.Subbarayalu, *A Tamil Brahmi inscription*, Sunday Standard, September 29, 1971., Also see K.V.Raman, *Some Aspects of Pandyan History*

# 8

# Use of Currency as gleaned from Pallava Inscriptions

It is known from the Sangam literature that the barter system was prevalent during Sangam period.[1] In addition to that we get references to Kasu, Pon and Kanam.[2] There is a solid reference regarding Kasu, in Kurunthogai, a Sangam literature. It states that the Kasu was in the shape of Margosa fruit.[3] It is evident that in almost all the instances Kasu is referred to in connection with ornaments.[4] There are considerable references with regard to pon, which is said to have been given to the learned poets as gift by the ruling monarch. It is said in Pattinappalai that the author Kadiyalur Uruthirangannanar was presented with a gift of Pathinaru Nurayiram pon.[5] Another poet Kappiyarruk Kappiyanar is stated to have got Narpathu Nurayiram pon from Kalangaik Kanni Narmudicheral.[6] Naccellaiyar another poet was given Nurayiram Kanam as gift by Adukotpattuc Ceralatan.[7] It is not known what the shape of the pon was. It is also not known whether the pon was different from Kasu. The value of pon may be inferred from the evidences of the later period records. The word pon seems to refer to Kalanju as Kalanju is always either preceded or followed by pon in Pallava inscriptions.

Kanam appears to have been used as currency since it is found collected as fine for the misbehaviour or for the default in execution of an agreement during Pallava period.

From the Treasure Trove and the archaeological excavations we are able to find coins made of silver, copper and lead assignable to Sangam age. So far we do not get any gold coin assignable to Sangam period from these sources. Likewise we are not able to get a single gold coin of the post Sangam age i.e. Pallava period. Therefore it makes us to come to the following conclusions.

1. There were gold pieces in Kalanju weights
2. Pon and Kasu were the mere attributes to Kalanju
3. Kanam was used as currency, the metal of which is not mentioned in any place. The coins found from Andippatti, Pumpuhar and Karur are perhaps Kanams in Various denominations.

Coming to Pallava period we get inscriptional evidences for the use of Kalanju, Kanam, Kasu, Pon and Panam. The earliest reference

comes from Kuram plates of Paramesvara varman[8] stating that the gifted land was purchased by giving Kanams. In almost all the places where we get references about Kalanju the word Kalancu is invariably either prefixed or suffixed or both with pon.[9] It is said that the Kalanju was weighed by Videlviduku stone.[10] It is also said in some other instances that the Kalanju which was refined by fire was given as gift. In another inscription it is said that the Kalanju which is equivalent in standard with the old Kasu was gifted.[11] Therefore it seems in all probability that the Kalanju was not used as coin, but used only as gold pieces.

When Kalanju was gifted for burning lamp or for offerings to god, it is clearly stated that the interest accrued upon the principal should be utilised for the expenses. One Kalanju fetched the annual interest of one Kalam of Paddy[12] during Nandivarman III. From another inscription, it is understood that one Kalanju was equivalent to five Kaddy of paddy. An inscription of Uthiramallur belonging to the period of Kampavarman says that a resident received 30 kalanju of gold as interest of 200 Kalanju[13] calculated at the rate of three manjadi per annum. In another inscription hailing from Thiruchirampoondi, it is stated that 1/8 pon had been collected as interest for one Kalanju per annum.[14] Therefore in all probability Kalanju was deposited as gold pieces and not used as coins.

Coming to Kanam it is very clear that it seems to have been used as currency, because Kanam is found mentioned as the fee collected for the default of agreement. Apparently in all places it is found used as fine collected from the defaulters, barring in only one inscription where it is stated to have used to purchase land. An inscription from Thiruvotriyur refers to Kanam as follows:

"If the offering is not presented, the person responsible for it would be punished by paying a fine of 4 1/4 kanam in Dharmasanam per day."[15] In another instance it is said that if the gift was destroyed, the persons who are responsible for this heinous act would be punished with a fine of 1000 kanam.[16] In another inscription of Nandivarman III datable to 852 A.D. it is mentioned that if the gift offered is denied by anybody then the person who is denying would be punished by imposing a fine of 1000 kanam without showing any authority of royal seal or royal order in Nilaikalam.[17]

There is only one reference about Palankasu[18] i.e. old Kasu, which is equalled in material to Kalanju.[19] There is also only one reference on Panam. This reference comes from the inscription of Sathamangalam in North Arcot District.[20] Usually the reference on panam

is traceable only from 14th century onwards. But it is not known how it has been mentioned in Sathamangalam inscription of Nandivarman III datable to 787 A.D. In the body of the inscription it is stated that the donor had gifted 17 Kalanju pon. The word Kalanju is also prefixed with Kasu. At the concluding portion of the inscription it is mentioned as follows;

Ivvaram Pavanandiyar vaitha panam

Urom Kappomaga

This reference makes one to presume that Kalanju was also called as panam during Nandivarman period. But in no other inscription, we get the reference of Panam as currency during pallava period. Likewise we do not get references to Panam either in our Sangam Literature or in our devotional literature. There is only one reference in Appar Devaram about Kasu, but not Panam. It is found that Panam was used as currency during Mauryan period. There were one panam and 1/2 panam. So it is obvious that the Jains who came from Mauryan country or who had contact with Mauryan country Jains, settled at Sathamangalam, might have used the word Panam for Kalanju which was prevalent in Tamilnadu.

We find Kanam used in the collection of taxes. The taxes collected in cash are termed as follows.

Nirttukkukkanam
Pattigaikkanam
Kalkottukkanam
Navitakkanam[21]
Brahminaskkanam
Cengodikkanam
Kalianakkanam
Kannittukkanam
Katirkkanam
Visakkanam
Kusakkanam[22]
Tirumukakkanam[23]

It is obvious from the names of the above taxes that Kanam was the currency prevalent during Pallava period. Kalanju appears to have not used as currency, but used only in terms of exchange.

1. Aingurunuru-47
2. N. Subramanian, *Sangam Polity*, p. 17
3. Kurunthogai-67
4. Aingurunuru, 310; Narrinai 66, 1.59
5. U. V. Swamynatha Iyer, *Pathirru pattu-Mulamum Ūraiyum*-1961, p. 513

6. Ibid-1957. p. 97
7. Ibid p. 158
8. T.V.Mahalingam, *The Inscriptions of Pallava*, No.46
9. Ibid No. 118, 147
10. Ibid No. 124
11. Ibid No. 122
12. Ibid No. 108
13. Ibid No. 227
14. Ibid No. 147
15. Ibid No. 168
16. Ibid No. 91
17. Ibid No. 120
18. Ibid No. 269
19. Ibid No. 108
20. Ibid No. 88
21. Pullur plates of Nandivarman II. *Pallavar inscriptions* No. 81
22. Kasakkudi plates of Nandivarman II, *Pallavar inscriptions* No. 80
23. Dandantottam plates of Nandivarman II, *Pallavar inscriptions* No, 89.

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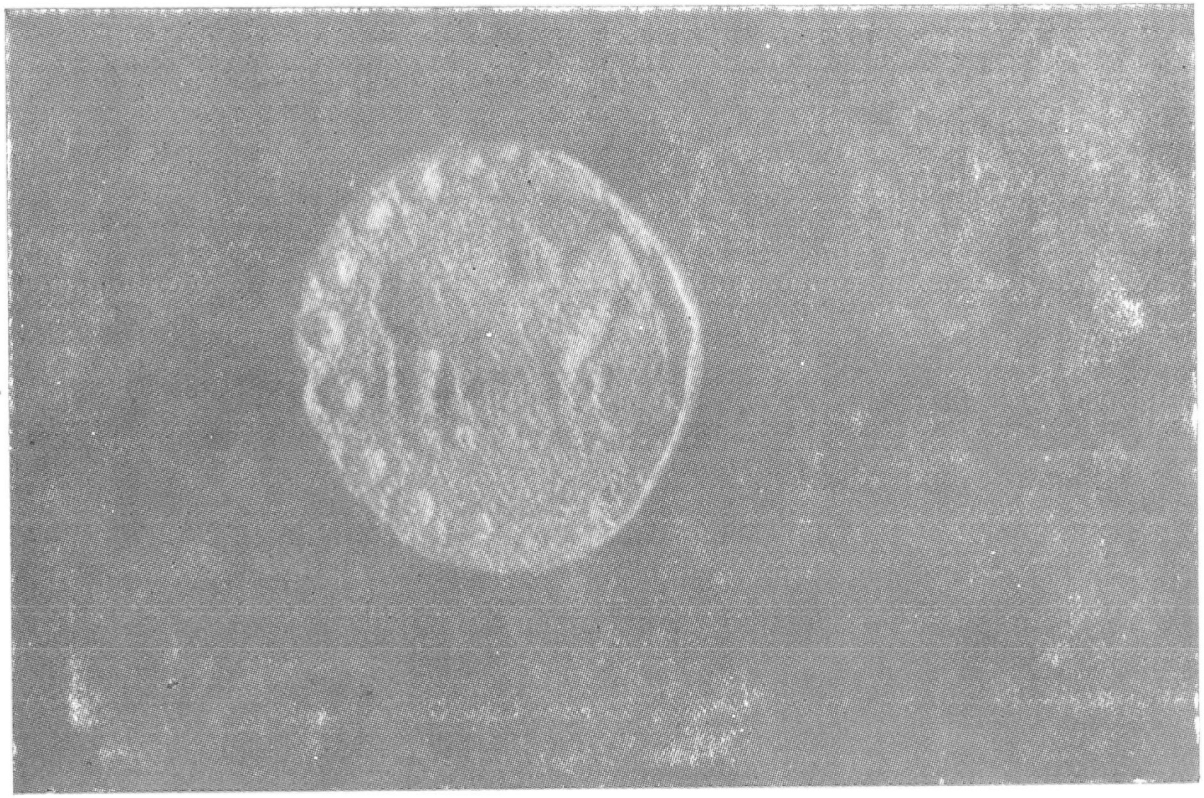
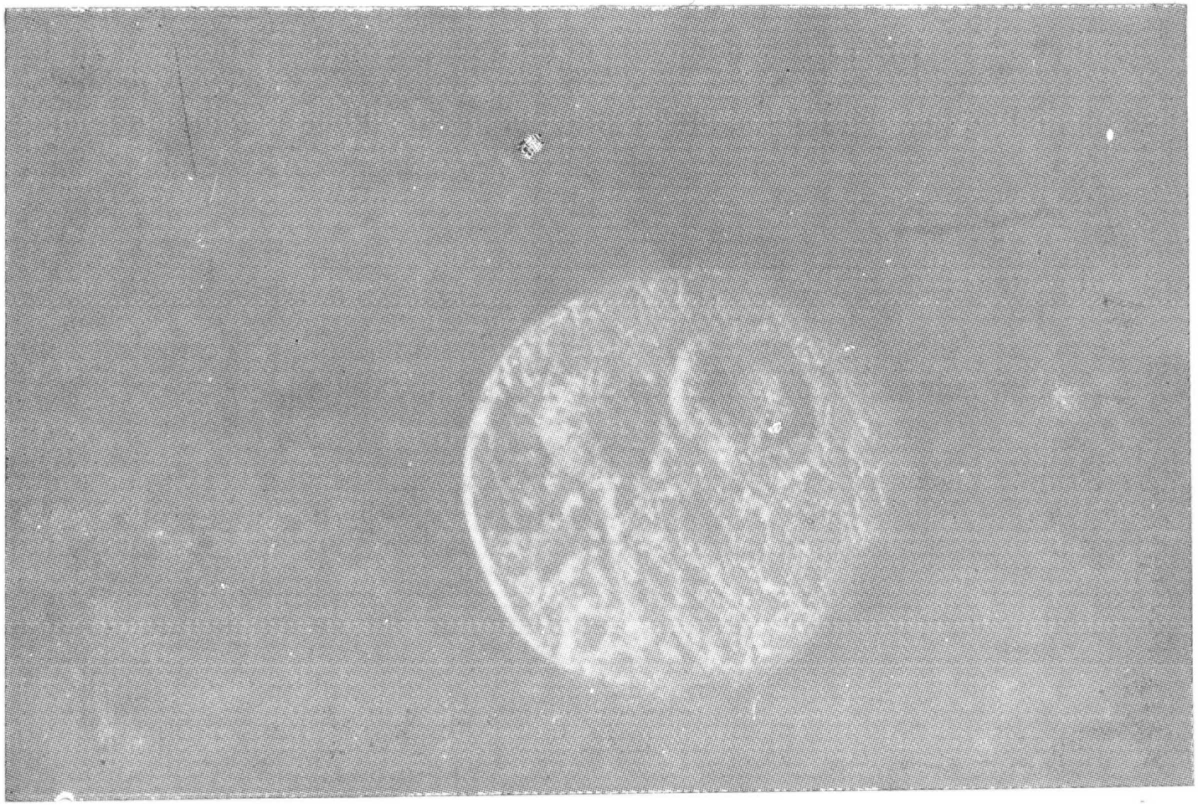


Lead Coin, Reverse, Pallava period, 5th - 6th century A.D., Thiruvanmiyur, Madras District



Lead Coin, Obverse, Pallava period, 5th - 6th century A.D.
Thiruvanmiyur, Madras District

# 9

# Kanda Gopalan Madai

The Coin hoard found at Varadarajanpettai, near Kurinjippadi in South Arcot District is consisting of six Ganga Coins, 70 Coins identified first as the issues of Ganapathi of Kakathiya dynasty and about 20 Panam of Vijayanagar period. There are 13 gold ornaments like bangles or rings and a few gold pieces along with these coins.

While informing this important find to the public this author had identified one set of coins as the issues of Kakathiya king Ganapathi,[1] as he had read the legend engraved on them as 'Kanapa'. But after having thoroughly examined the same coins, he has come to the conclusion that these coins are the "Kandagopalan Madai", found mentioned in inscriptions.

The legend written on the obverse of the coin is to be read as "Kanda" instead of "Kanapa" as the last letter does not have the straight second line for 'Pa' which is usually found in chola characters. The fourth letter 'ti' for Ganapathi is not found in any one of the coins of this hoard.

Further on the obverse of this coin there is afigure of 'Gopala' in an inverted position playing a flute in standing posture, below the legend. Both the legend "Kanda" and the figure of "Gopala" seem to have been made intentionally to denote the name "Kanda Gopala". On the basis of this clue we must attempt to identify some of the coins by combining both the legend and the figure found on them. The figures of sun, moon and an umbrella are also found.The letter 'Sri' written in Telugu character is seen as a prefix and suffix to the legend.

There were two issues of Kandagopalan Madai, viz. Kandagopalan Palamadai and Kandagopalan Pudumadai. Kandagopalan Palamadai seems to have been the earlier issue on the basis of its name. But in inscriptions it even occurs after the issue of Pudumadai, new issue. Kandagopalan Pudumadai is referred to even in 1184 A.D.[2] In another inscription a Kandagopalan Madai which may be either Old or New one is mentioned in 1181 A.D. itself.[3] Kandagopalan Vasipada Pudumadai occurs in C. 1259 A.D.[4] Hence it seems that the Kandagopalan new issue was in current from 1184 A.D. to C. 1259 A.D. Kandagopalan Old issue also was current simultaneously.

It is difficult to identify the issues of the Kandagopalan Madai or the Kandagopalan Pudumadai which were in existence during 1181 to 1184 A.D. respectively.

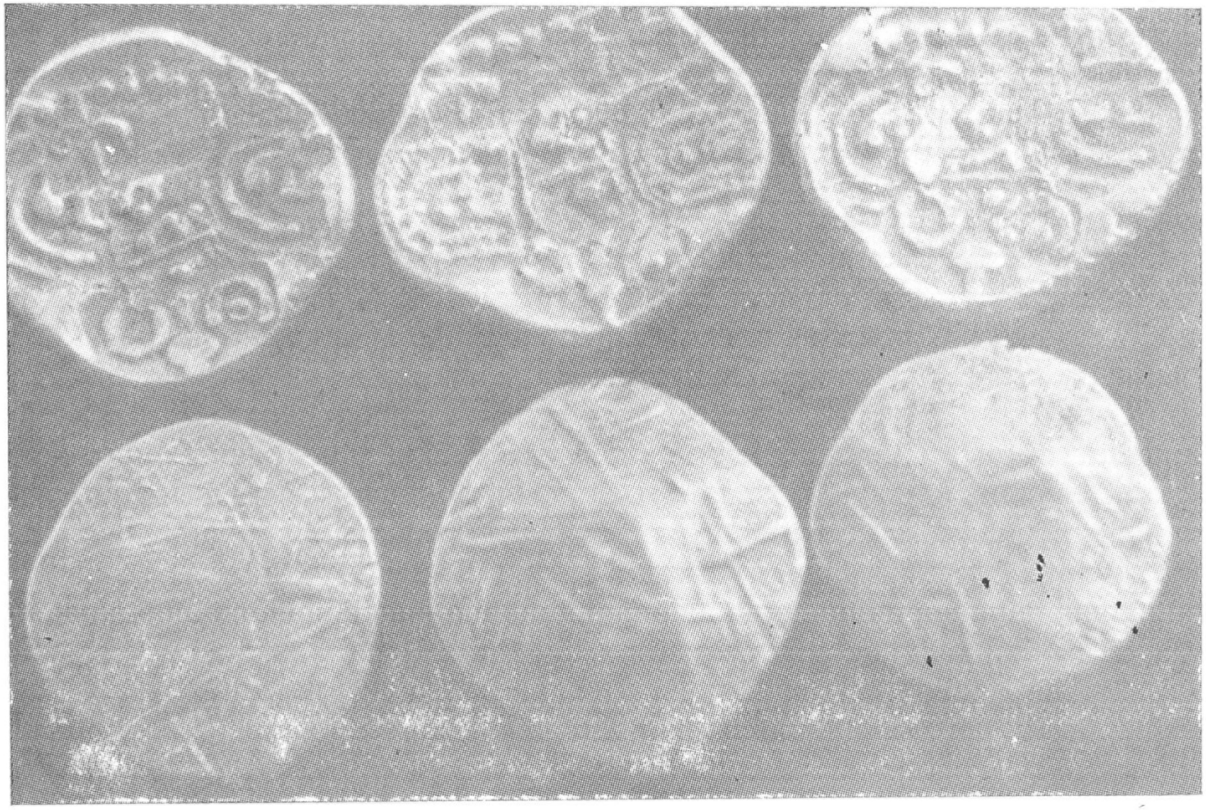
In the geneology of Telugu Chola kings it is found that there were three kings having the title Kanda Gopalan. Tikka I alias Tirukkalattidevan alias Kanda Gopalan who ruled Kanchi from 1223 A.D. to 1250 A.D. Manmasiddhi II alias Vijayakandgopalan who ruled from 1250 to 1291 A.D. and Virakandagopalan who ruled from 1291 A.D. to 1297 were those three kings. As the latter two kings had their names as Vijaya Kandagopala and Virakandagopala they could not have issued these coins which are bearing the legend only Kandagopalan. Hence it is obvious that Tikka I alias Kandagopalan must have been the issuer of these coins, which were in existence during 13th century. He served as a vassal for Cholas in the beginning and seems to have ruled independently later. He was a staunch Vaishnavaite. He had endowed many gifts to God Varadarajapperumal at Kanchipuram.

He had instituted a service called "Kanda Gopalan Sandhi"[5] in Arulala temple, Kanchipuram, probably after his name. His queen Lakshmi devi was also a Vaishnavite. It is stated in an inscription that she had gifted lands to this temple. It is also stated that boundary stones were planted demarcating the gifted land by fixing stones with the figure of "Kanda Gopalan".[6] A village known as "Kanda Gopalan Chaturvedimangalam"[7] seems to have been in existence during his period.

The occurrence of Kandagopalan madai coin assumes importance since this is the first discovery of this issue. These coins have been accidentally found by an uneducated villager. These are all gold coins and were die-struck. Some zigzag lines are found on the reverse.

The method of casting legends on coins by die-struck process was prevalent in Deccan only and not in Tamilnadu. There are some coins of Rajendrachola which were die-struck. But they were found in Deccan region only. Hence this Kandagopalan madai was also to have been minted in Deccan. Another important feature of this coin is the shape which has a cavity in centre. This cavity might have been formed in the minting process of the coin.

Before the discovery of this coin hoard, there seems to have been only one coin of this type in the collection of Thiru. Arumugam a coin collector of Trichy. Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has a photograph of that coin in the Photo Album. But it has not been identified



Gold Coins, Gandagopalan Madai, 13th century A.D., Kurinjippadi, South Arcot District.

before and the provenance of it and the metal are also unknown. A photograph of a coin of this type is found illustrated in Elliot's book *Coinage of South India*. But it has not been identified by him also.

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1. Natana. Kasinathan, Ancient coins discovered, *Hindu*, dated 10-3-89. These coins were first examined by Thriu. M. Chandramoorthy, Registering Officer of this department.
2. *A.R.E.* No. 561 of 1912.
3. Ibid No. 560 of 1912.
4. Ibid 432, 434 of 1919.
5. Ibid 607 of 1919.
6. Ibid 415 of 1919.
7. Nilakanta Sastri, K.A., *The Colas*, pp. 387-388

# 10

## Viraccampan Kuligai

Viracampan Kuligai, a coin, was prevalent in North Arcot, South Arcot and Chengalpattu region during 14th century A.D. This coin seems to have been issued by a Sambuvaraya King, but it is difficult to identify which particular Sambuvaraya King was the issuer of this coin.

The coin under discussion is referred to in three inscriptions in connection with the sale of land and the sale of villages during the period of Venrumankonda Sambuvaraya (1332-1339) and Rajanarayana Sambuvaraya (1337-1373). Of the three, the earliest inscription[1] comes from Gangayanallur in North Arcot District. It is dated in the 17th regnal year of Venru mankonda Sambuvaraya, who ascended the throne in 1322 A.D., recording that a certain Tiruvengadamudaiyan, on getting 170 Vasipada Viraccampan Kuligai gave a receipt for the cost of a Kani sold to the villagers of Nilakkantachaturvedi Mangalam and Mallinatha Chaturvedi Mangalam, situated in Karaivali Andinadu.[1] The other two inscriptions are written in the 5th and 20th regnal years of Sakalaloka Chakravarti Rajanarayana Sambuvaraya. Among the two, one belongs to Pudupattinam in Chengalpattu M.G.R. District and the other comes from Ukkal in North Arcot District.

Pudupattinam inscription[2] registers a sale deed executed by the merchants of Uraiyur residing at Pudupattinam for the receipt of 550 Viraccampan Kuligai in respect of the land sold to one Tirugnanasambandam.

Ukkal record[3] refers to the sale of Villages Padivitangal by the assembly of Ukkal to two persons for 200 Viraccampan Kuligai to provide funds for renovating the sluice of the tank.

From the above mentioned three records it is not possible to determine the exact value of Viraccampan Kuligai and the metal in which it was made. The only thing that can be surmised is that this coin could have been issued by a Sambuvaraya King as the name indicates Viraccampan.

Now it is our problem to identify this Viraccampan to a particular Chambuvaraya King. One Viraccampannayan alias Sambuvaraya is mentioned in an inscription[4] of Maravaraman Tribhuvana chakravartin Sundara Pandyadeva. Venkeyya identifies this Sundara Pandya with the patricide Sundara, the opponent of Vira Pandya who fled to Delhi in

1310 A.D. Another King known as Viraccampan Edirilisola Champu is referred to in an epigraph of Virinclipuram in North Arcot District. This epigraph is written in Saka 1228 corresponding to 1305 A.D. The third inscription[6] belonging to Marangiyur mentions about a Viraccampan Sandhi instituted at the time of Rajanarayana Chambuvarayan.

From the analysis of the above three inscriptions the following conclusions can be arrived at.

1. Since we get the reference of the Viraccampan Kuligai even during the period of Venru mankonda Sambuvaraya, Rajanarayana, the son and successor of the former could not be the issuer of this coins.
2. Though there is reference of Viraccampan Kuligai in the inscription of Venru mankonda Sambuvaraya he could not be the issuer as he is not mentioned in any of his inscription as Viraccampan.
3. Hence it is apparent that Viraccampannayan Chambuvarayan or the Viraccampan alias Edirilisola Champu could be the issuer of this coin. Kulasekhara Sambuvaraya, who ruled from 1306 to 1330 may have also been called as Viraccampan Edirilisolan.

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1. S.I.I. Vol. I., No. 52
2. ARE 102 of 1932 - 33
3. Ibid 162 of 1939 – 40
4. ARE 87 of 1990.
5. Ibid 183 of 1939 - 40
6. Ibid 91 of 1935 - 36.

# 11

## Date of Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions

**Earlier Theories**

The theories enunciated by scholars so far on the origin and date of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions is as follows :

I. Mahadevan, who is deserved to be ever remembered and congratulated for having satisfactorily deciphered the cave inscriptions, has postulated his theory as follows:-

> "The Tamil Brahmi script which is an adaptation of the Mauryan Brahmi script to suit the needs of Tamil phonetic system must be a Post-Asokan or Late Mauryan development which can be dated from the end of the 3rd century B.C. or the beginning of the 2nd century B.C."[1]

R. Nagaswamy, who was an associate of I. Mahadevan while copying and deciphering these cave inscriptions, has the following observations on the date of these inscriptions.

> "Even if a minimum of the hundred years are given for the adoption of the script of Tamil language it would indicate only of first century B.C. as the period for its introduction in a majority of the inscriptions falling within the christian era. The earliest cave inscriptions could at best be assigned only to the First century B.C.[2]"

The above two scholars based their arguments on the assumption that the Tamil Brahmi Script was an adaptation of Asokan Brahmi Script.

There are also some scholars whose views are quite contrary to the above mentioned views. The first and foremost among them was T. N. Subramaniyan, who was of the opinion that the Brahmi Script should have been designed for a Dravidian language, very likely the Tamil which was the oldest and primary language of the group and later on adopted for Prakrit, when it was evolved, synthesized the Dravidian language and made the common language of the whole country[3] and he had assigned the date of Circa 3rd century B.C. to the script.

K.G. Krishnan the renowned Epigraphist also agrees with the theory that the Tamil Brahmi was independently existing. He also says that if the above

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theory is found correct, after further investigation, a stage can be envisaged when a basic Brahmi alphabet was probably in use all over India.[4]

K. V. Soundararajan, one of the eminent archaeologists thinks that a simple script out of a fusion of Aryo-Dravidian genious during the period from 950 to 600 B.C. and the concrete script in public documents with finite alphabetical pattern, distinctly separate from the demands of Dravidian tongues of the South was emerged during the period 600 to 200 B.C. He further states that in the South, same Brahmi script was in existence with a separate vowel symbol along with consonant indicating pure consonants and disparate linguistic usages. He quotes Battiprolu and cave Brahmi inscriptions of Tamilnadu for this pattern of writing.[5]

**Important Points**

From the pregoing theories of the above mentioned scholars the following points can be culled out.

1, There is one view that the Tamil Brahmi was the adaption of Asokan Brahmi to suit the Tamil phonetic system.
2. The other view is that the Tamil Brahmi was co-existing with Asokan Brahmi and for the both scripts there was a common script devised out of a fusion of Aryo-Dravidian genius.
3. Most of the scholors date the Tamil Brahmi to 3rd century B.C.

**Four Main Factors**

Let us now look in detail the date of these inscriptions. To find out the date, one has to analyse the following factors.

1. The Palaeography of the inscriptions.
2. The system of writing found in these inscriptions.
3. Comparing the inscriptions with coin legends.
4. The stratigraphical study of the inscribed potsherds collected from excavations.

**Palaeography of the inscriptions**

Pulankurichi and Jambai inscriptions help us to determine the date of cave inscriptions on palaeographical grounds. Pulankurichi inscription is taken to have been dated in Saka 192 corresponding to 270 A.D. Considering the Palaeography of this inscription, the Araccalur inscription is to be dated still earlier and automatically the cave inscriptions are to be dated still more earlier date than the dates fixed by I. Mahadevan.

Jambai inscriptions refer to *Sathiyaputo*, the epithet to Atitya king used in Asokan inscription only. Sangam literature never used this epithet to denote Athiyars. Hence Jambai inscription may have been engraved either contemporaneously with the Asokan inscriptions or in the Pre-Sangam period. If it is so, on the basis of the palaeography of this inscription, the date of other inscriptions are to be reconsidered.

**System of writing found in these Inscriptions.**

As, I. Mahadevan has said, the Tamil Brahmi Inscriptions have been written in two distinct methods.

In the earlier inscriptions "a consonantal symbol unaccompanied by 'a' medial vowel sign is to be taken to represent a basic consonant".

In the later epigraphs, "a consonantal symbol is either basic or has an inherent 'a' depending on the context.

In still later inscription, we find the basic consonant is written by adding a Pulli to differentiate it from the vowelled consonant.

In the earlier inscriptions the medial short vowel sign is shown by a horizontal stroke on the top of the consonant and by writing vowel 'a' by the side of pure consonant; the medial long vowel sign is also shown in two ways, one is as in the case of short vowel sign and the other is by long vowel adding vowel 'a' by the side of vowelled consonant. The special medial sign i.e. a vertical downward stroke to the horizontal stroke of Bhattiprolu script is not found in these inscriptions.

Hence Tamil Brahmi system of writing is abviously earlier than the system of writing having a consonant for short vowelled consonant, and adding a horizontal line on the top for a long vowelled consonant.

The later system of writing is found in Asokan Brahmi. Therefore, in all probability the Tamil Brahmi may have been in existence even before the introduction of Asokan Brahmi. The absence of the Samyukta aksharam also supports the view that the Tamil Brahmi was earlier than the Asokan Brahmi.

Another point in support of their argument is that the Tamil Brahmi has borrowed the long 'e' and 'o' from Asokan Brahmi and created the short 'e' and 'o' by putting a dot over them as if there was no script for 'e' and 'o' in Tamil Brahmi. This assumption seems to be basically wrong. Because the short 'e' is used in four Tamil Brahmi inscriptions without dot.

Erumiyar — Cittannavasal

Elaiurarittin — Karunkalakkudi

Erukatur - Tiruparankunram

Eriaritan - Anaimalai

In earlier epigraphs the sign denoting 'e' short vowel may also have been used for 'e' long vowel. As Mahadevan himself has mentioned that for the short 'a' and long 'a' the difference may be found but by invoking a knowledge of the language.

The next point to be discussed is the formation of the letters zha, la, ra and na. It is argued that 'zha' has been formed by combining the tha and da, the 'la' by a slight addition with la, the ra by combining ta and ra and na by a slight curve of na. This argument also seems to be not satisfactory. Because each letter in Tamil Brahmi is a slight variation of other scripts. In vowels one can notice the long 'a' and 'u' have small additional line to differentiate from the short 'a' and 'u'. Even in consonants ca and va, na and na are written with slight variation.

With regard to zha it is curious to note that two varga letters of Asokan Brahmi have been combined to form this letter. Not in a single place the varga letter is used for writing Tamil words in cave inscriptions. The usage of varga letter is found to write Prakrit word as one finds grantha letter for writing sanskrit word in Chola inscriptions. Therefore, zha letter also may have been in use even from the introduction of Tamil Brahmi letters. This letter is found in Mangulam inscriptions which are taken as the earliest cave inscriptions by I. Mahadevan. Since zha is the special charactor of Tamil language the people may have invented a letter for it of their own accord.

**Comparing the inscription with coin legends**

The bilingual coin of Satavahana king Vasishti putra Sri Satakarni is the sheet anchor for determining the date of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions. On this coin the Prakrit legend is written in Asokan Brahmi characters while the Tamil legend is written in Tamil Brahmi script. Since this coin was the issue of Vacittiputra Satakarni, it is dated to 2nd century A.D. The Tamil Brahmi characters of this coin has Pulli for pure consonant. Using dot for pure consonant is a later development in Tamil Brahmi script.

On the basis of the palaeography of this coin one has to push back the date of the earlier system of writing of the cave inscriptions to a date earlier to Asokan Brahmi

**Stratigraphical study of the inscribed potsherds**

In Tamilnadu almost all the excavations of the historical sites have yielded considerable number of inscribed potsherds. This shows beyond doubt that the Tamils were quite familiar with the Tamil Brahmi

script. Asoka had not sent his mission to propagate the Brahmi script as well as his religion to Tamilnadu. Hence it is quite logic to presume that the Tamils had an independent script of their own i.e. the Tamil Brahmi which is mentioned in Prakrit Book as Damili.

Recently the archaeologists have collected number of inscribed potsherds from Kodumanal in Periyar District. These are to be studied with stratigraphical backgrounds. A new technique known as Thermo Luminisence has also come to the field. This technique could date the potsherds. Using this technique Dr. S. R. Rao has dated the potsherds found in Dwaraka excavation to 1500 B.C. If this technique is applied to our inscribed potsherds also, we can have a clear cut date to all of our cave inscriptions.

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1. *Origin, Evolution and Reforms of the Tamil Script*, Seminar papers published by University of Madras-1983.
2. S.P. Gupta and K.S. Ramachandran, *The origin of Brahmi Script*, p. 82. In the year 1967; Dr. Nagaswamy had different view in which he had stated that the early Tam i Script was not derived from the Asokan Brahmi but was contemporary with it.
3. *S.I.T.I.* Vol. III. Part II, p. 1600
4. *The origin of Brahmi Script*, p. 69.
5. Ibid p. 63-64.

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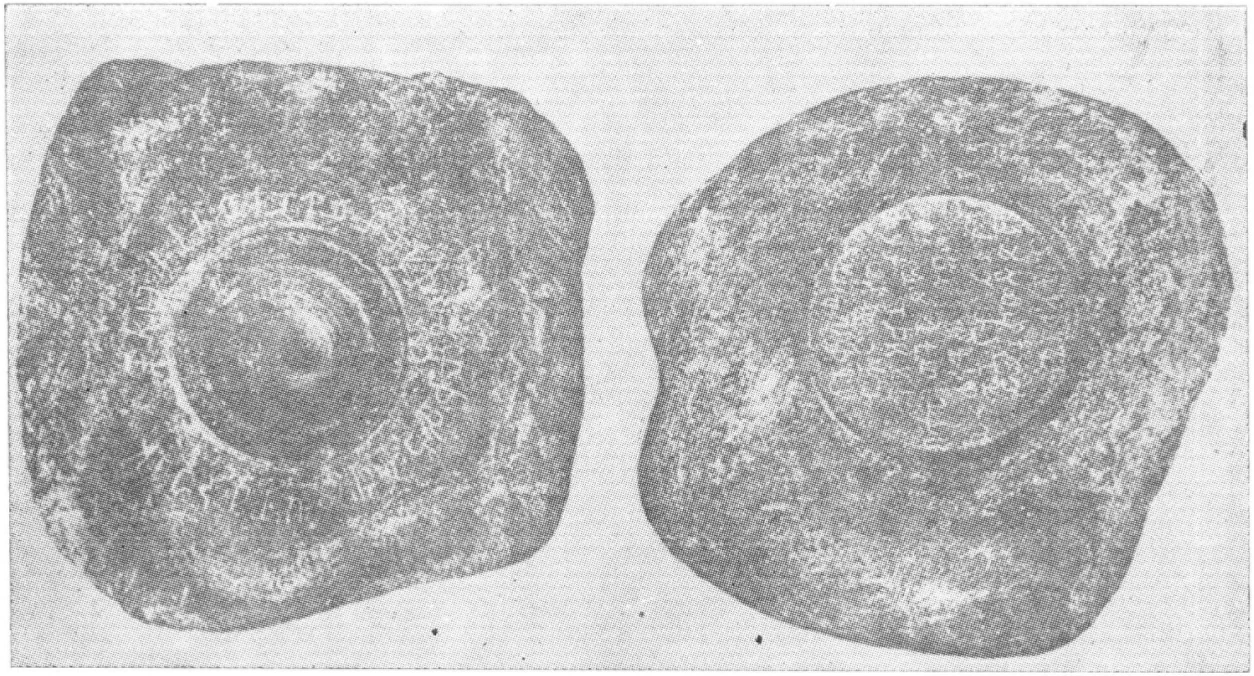
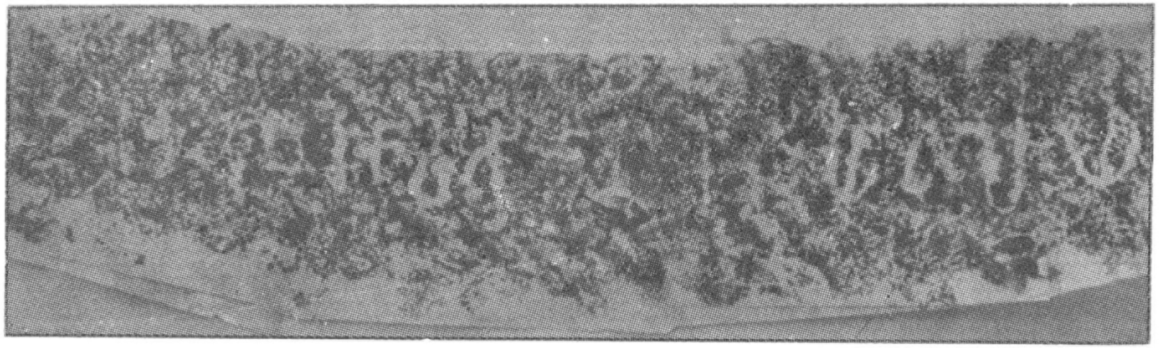
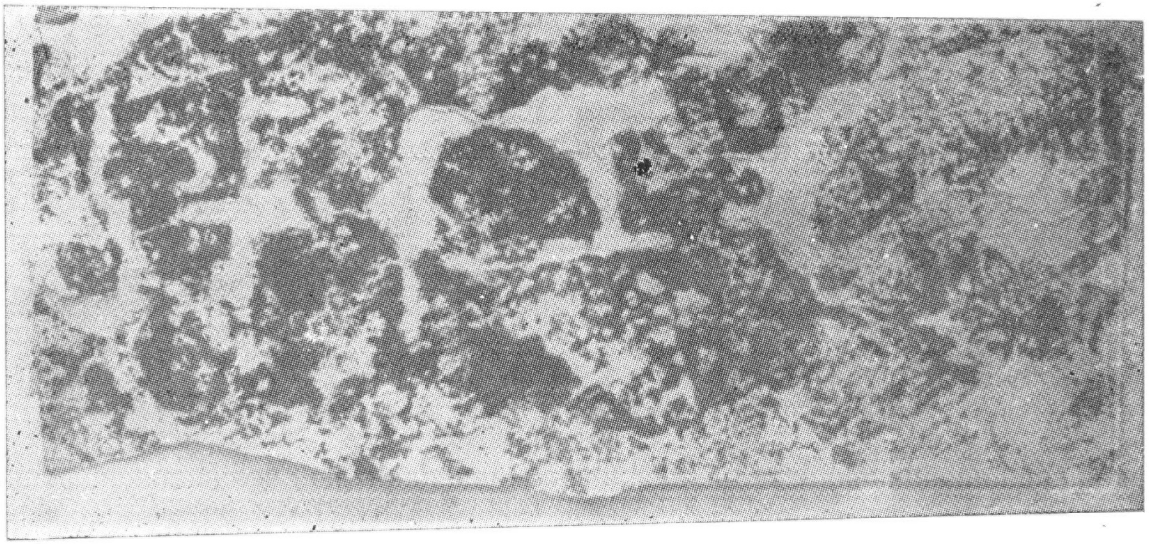


Stone Casket of a Buddha stupa, Bhattiprolu, Andrapradesh 2nd century B.C.?



Ancient Tamil inscription, Thirumalai, 2nd century B.C.
Pasumpon Thevar Thirumaganar District



Archaic Tamil Inscription, Tirumalai, Tevar Tirumaganar District.

# 12

## Place Names as Gleaned from Hero - Stone Inscriptions

The Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology has copied about 300 hero-stone inscriptions from the North Arcot District and the Dharmapuri District. They are datable from 5th century A.D. to 10th century A.D. Majority of them belong to Pallava period. They are being studied in different angles. This article tries to examine the place names found in hero-stone inscriptions so far published by the Department of Archaeology.

The inscriptions ranging from the 5th century A.D. to 9th century A.D. have been taken for examination. For comparative purpose a few hero-stones belonging to 10th century have also been analysed. We get hero-stones belonging from Simhavarman to Kampavarman of Pallava dynasty. A few hero-stones belong to Nulamba[1] and Ganga[2] dynasties. The style and characteristics of the hero-stone inscriptions of Kampavarman of Pallava dynasty and the hero-stone epigraphs of Vijayalaya and Parantaka of Chola dynasty appear more or less similar in nature. Therefore the comparison has been necessitated with a few chola inscriptions of earlier kings.

These inscriptions mention the following number of Nadus viz. Venadu[3], Melvenadu[4], Kovurnadu,[5], Merkovalurnadu[6], Ganganadu[7], Puramalainadu[8], Koyinurnadu[9], Velkalinadu[10], Ma(va)nnanadu[11]; Nayanurnadu[12], Pangalanadu[13], Mikonrainadu[14], Tenvenadu[15], Miladu[16] and Palkunrakottam[17]. Number of villages are included in these nadus.

Invariably the names of the villages are ended with Ur or Padi excepting one or two. The Urs are the typical villages of Marudam tract while the Padis are of Mullai tract. The names of villages indicate that they had their origin from the nature and its environs i.e. mountain, river, trees, birds, animals, etc.

In the case of Nadu it seems that the clan and the village played dominant role and lent their names to christen the names of nadus. Though these parts were under the great powers like Pallava, Ganga and

Nulamba, it appears that the rulers had never thought of having their names as the name of the division, a practice which had become the natural phenomena of the cholas during the medieval period.

Among the nadus, Vennadu seems to have enjoyed a dominant position. Area to the west of Vennadu was called as Melvennadu, while the south of Vennadu as Ten vennadu. It is found that there was also one Kilvennadu[18], i.e., to the east of Vennadu. This nadu was named after Vel *i.e.* Vel + Nadu, then became Vennadu according to the cannons of the Tamil grammar. The interesting point to be noticed is that each nadu had been divided into East and West. eg., Merkovalurnadu, Mikonrainadu etc. Mikonrainadu is also called as Mikunrainadu[19]. This suggests that this nadu was called after Mikunru i.e. western hill.

As stated above the names of the villages seem to have been derived mostly from nature excepting one or two. The following names of villages would show how they were etymologically derived from the mother nature.

| **Name of the village** | **Derived from** |
|---|---|
| Kattaiyur | Wood |
| Kuppaiyur | Debris |
| Kovur | Cow |
| Andapadi | Owl |
| Karungali | Wood, a kind |
| Kottaiyur | Nut |
| Pallanur | Pit |
| Chirridaiyaru | Small river |
| Ilangunru | Small hill |
| Velur | Vel, a clan |
| Malaiyanur | Malaiyan or Malayaman a dynasty |
| Puliyur | Tiger |
| Takadur | Sheet |
| Kannanur | Kannan, a clan or Lord Krishna |
| Muttur | Pearl |
| Arunkunram | Hill |
| Kudalur | Rivers joining together |

Some of the villages still retain the ancient names either in original or in slightly modified form. Examples are given below :

| **Present Name** | **Ancient Name** |
|---|---|
| Iravandavadi | Iramandaivadi (1971/51) |
| Velur | Velur (1971/54) |

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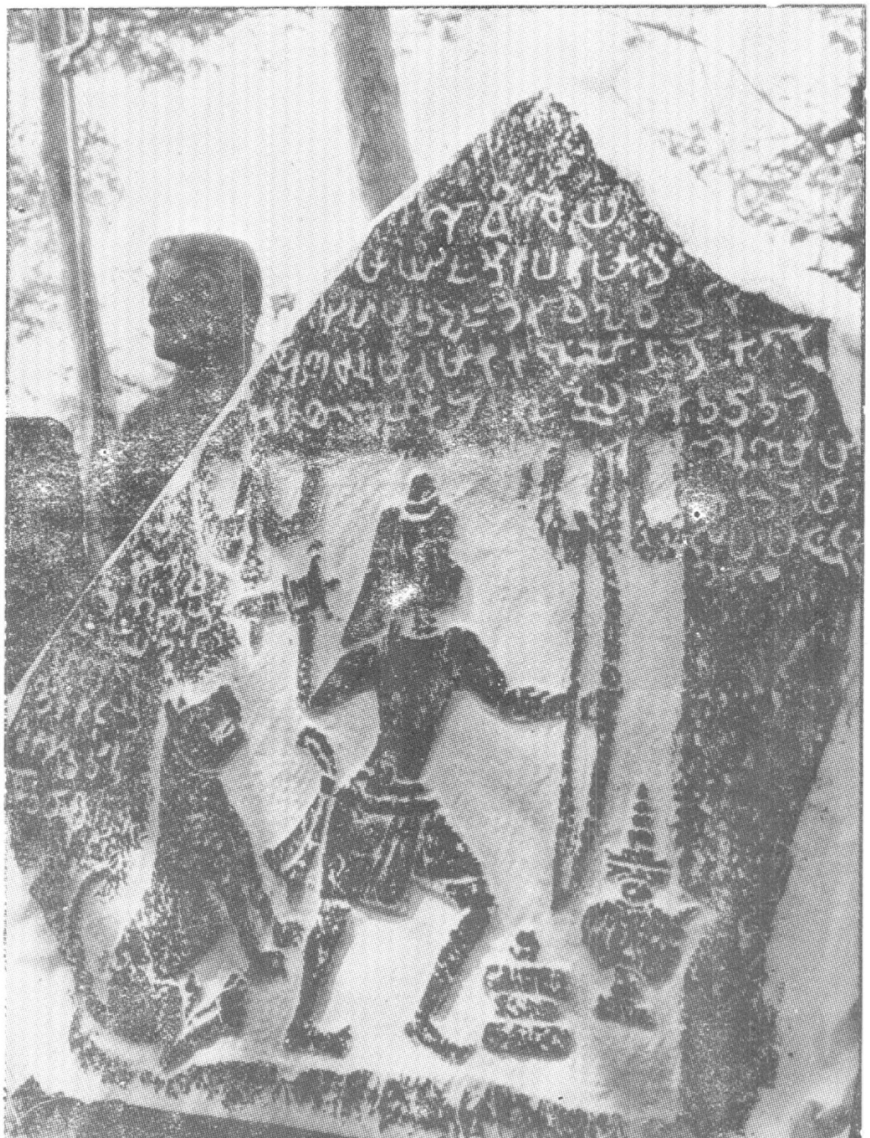
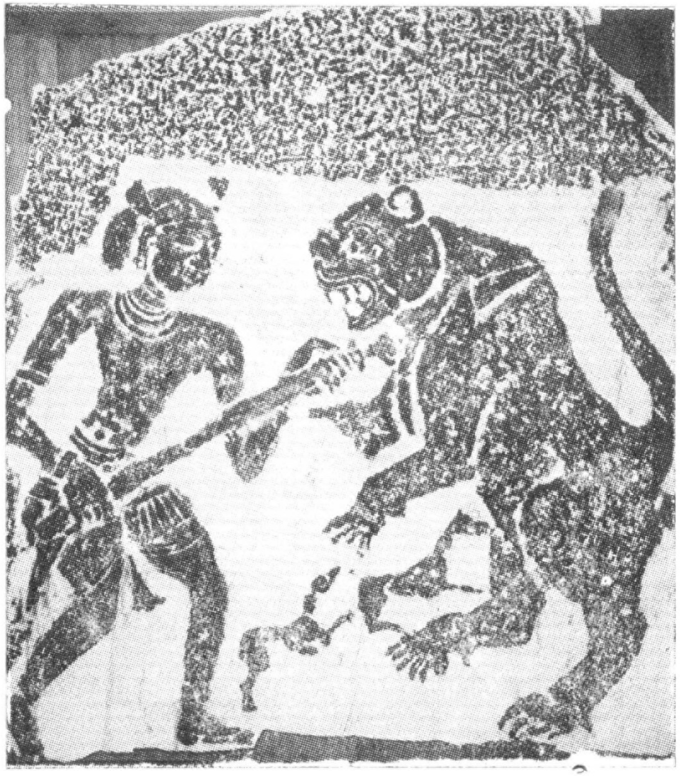
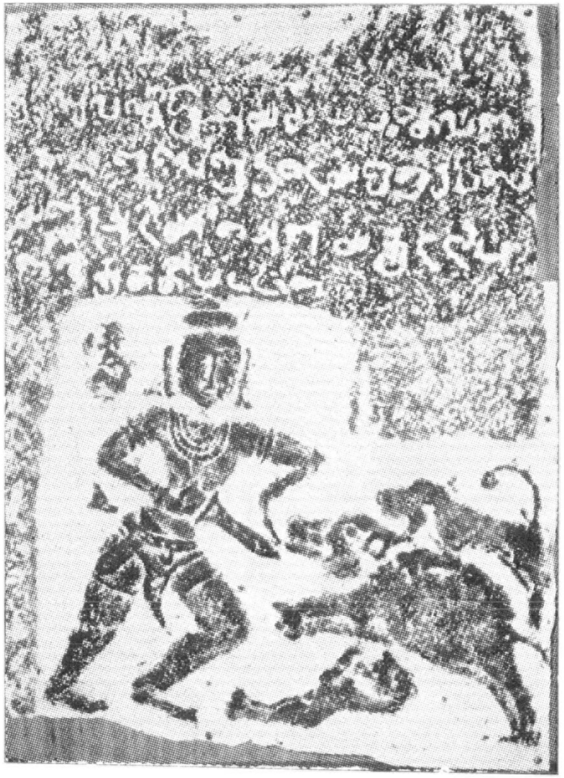


Hero - stone, Mahendravarman period, 7th century A.D.,
Thiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar District



Hero - Stone, Vijayanagar period, 15th century A.D., Anandur, Dharmapuri District



Hero - Stone Inscription, 9th - 10th century A.D., Reddiyur, Dharmapuri District

| | |
|---|---|
| Karunkalippadipatti | Karunkalippadi (1971/113) |
| Talaiyuttu | Talaiyur (1971/74) |
| Mashar | Malcaru (1971/127) |
| Pinjur | Punjaiyur (1971/72) |
| Kudalur | Kudal (1971/50) |
| Viranam | Vennam (1971/47) |
| Cattanur | Cattanur (1971/47) |
| Toraippadi | Topparuvaruppadi (1971/30) |

The names of the villages distinctly denote that they were the settlements of cultivators, baxeing only one i.e. Cangamangalam which appears to be a brahmin settlement. Similarly no caste based village name is found, though there are very few names of the villages based on clan i.e. Velur and dynasty i.e. Malaiyanur.[20]

In the same way no village is mentioned with the suffix Puram. Puram denotes for Nagaram i.e. town. In one of the inscriptions, the hero Tenpaliyan who was living at Karunkalippadi is said to have belonged to Nigamam which is generally believed to be a Nagaram. Obviously, the Nigamam, mentioned in this inscription, may have been situated far away from this area.

From the above analysis it is clear that these villages and the nadus are situated in the remote region where no brahmin settlement or town seem to have existed. The people of these villages were either cultivators or cattle breeders who solely depend upon their cattle.

1. Nagaswamy R. *Chengam Nadukarkal* (Tamil), 1972/6
2. Ibid. 1971/115
3. Ibid. 1081/47
4. Ibid. 1972/2
5. Ibid. 1972/17
6. Ibid. 1971/36

7 to 12. Ibid. 1972/19

13. Ibid 1972/27A
14. Ibid. 1971/54
15. Ibid. 1971/114
16. Ibid. 1971/47
17. Ibid. 1971/27
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. 1971/56
20. Ibid.

# 13

## Some rare inscriptions of Tamilnadu

Among the inscriptions so far discovered in Tamilnadu, the cave inscriptions are assigned to the earliest period i.e. the pre-christian era. Of them the Mangulam epigraph comes first in chronological order as well as in historical nature. It refers to one Pandya king Neduncheliyan[1] Similarly the Pugalur epigraph occupies first place as far as the chera dynasty is concerned.[2] It throws welcome light on three successive rulers of chera dynasty namely Ko-Atan Cellirumporai, his son Perunkadungo and his son Ilankadungo. This is the first epigraphical evidence which implicitly refers to three chera rulers who are otherwise mentioned in literature known as Padirrupattu.[3]

The above two epigraphs mention the endowment of monasteries caused to be made during the period of those rulers to the monks of either Jain or Buddhist religion. It is clear that the religion other than that of Hindu religion had some strong hold in Tamilnadu during the pre and post christian era.

The next in importance is the Pulankuricci inscription which is probably written in Circa 3-4th centuries A.D. The King Koccendankurran, mentioned in this inscription is not identifiable with any of the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers. Hence he is identified by some with the celebrated Kalabhra ruler Kurruvan.[4]

This epigraph[5] reflects the sociological, administrative, religious and cultural aspects of Tamilnadu during 3-4th centuries A.D. i.e, in post Sangam period. There were number of revenue officials to assess and collect the land revenue. There were also officials to protect and look after the religious establishments. People were tolerant towards all religions such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and dedicated temples to Gods of all religions.

It is seen that there were assemblies to look after the village as well as temple administration. The villages were divided into different Kudumbus i.e. Variams. This epigraph mentions the territorial divisions such as Pandinadu and Kongunadu. This is the first epigraphical reference to confirm firmly that Kongu region was separately called as

Kongunadu even from 4th century A.D. along with the well known three Nadus namely Cheranadu, Cholanadu and Pandyanadu. The sub-divisions known as Kudalurnadu, Vennadu, Ollaiyurkurram and Muthurrukkurram are also mentioned. Brahmadaya villages and Urs were also in existence. Brahmin settlement is mentioned as Brahmadayam as found in Sangam Literature and not as Brahmadeyam mentioned in later inscriptions.

Reference is found to Devakulam, Palli and Kottam in this epigraph revealing the fact that there were Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples in Tamilnadu and an amicable situation was prevailing with regard to religious activities.

This epigraph also informs us on some hitherto unknown terms such as Pandakar, Virrumaccarikal, Kalasam. Pandakar is taken to mean the Pandarakar, treasurer; while the Virummaccarikal to Brahmaccarikal, the bachelors and Kalasam seems to denote the cattle.

There are two interesting epigraphs which throw light on Sallehana which is reverently mentioned in literature. Till the discovery of Irettimalai inscription[5A], Tirunatharkunru inscription[6] has enjoyed the unique position in this respect. Irettimalai inscription seems to refer to the erection of memorial stone for an individual who had lost his life by fasting unto death. As this epigraph doesn't refer to the heroic death of a person, it is believed to have been the death of Sallehana as is mentiond in Tirunatharkunru inscription. If it is accepted, it would be the second authentic reference to Sallehana in Tamilnadu.

The hero stone inscriptions ranging from 5th century A.D. to 10th century A.D. supply volume of informations on Pallava and Chola periods. Some of them have even drastically altered the established theories over the chronology of certain pallava kings and their contemporary saiva saints.[7]

Manur inscription of Maranjadaiyan reveals the system of local self Government prevalent during the first quarter of 9th century A.D. in Tamilnadu. This inscription refers to six resolutions adopted by the Sabha of Manur in 802 A.D. i.e. in the 35th regnal year of pandya king Maranjadaiyan.[8]

The first two resolutions deal mainly with the sitting members. They state that though the sitting members are the permanent share-holders or had become shareholders by purchase, gift or dowry, they cannot take part in the discussions hereafter unless they are fully conversant with Manthra Brahmana inclusive of one Dharma and are of good conduct.

The other two conditions are about those who are to be elected in future. They lay down that those who possess a quarter, a half or three quarters of a sravanai acquired by purchase, gift or dowry shall not except by possessing a full sravanai be allowed to enter the sabha and among those who acquire shares by purchase, though it is a full sravanai, entry shall be allowed into the sabha only to such persons who have passed an examination in an entire Veda together with the Parisista. Those who got allowed by means other than the above shall take part only in the discussions.

The above three conditions indirectly suggest that before the enactment of these conditions, there was no restriction for entering into the sabha for those who were not conversant with Manthra Brahamana inclusive of one Dharma. It further leads us to surmise that those who had some property with the knowledge of Tamil could contest the elections before the beginning of 9th century A.D. and after the settlment of Brahmins they began to prescribe that the knowledge of Vedas and Manthram as essential for entering into sabhas.

During 10th century, especially in chola country, the study of Vedas and Manthras was more required for those who sought to contest in the village assembly elections. This fact is attested by the famous Uttaramerur inscription of Parantaka Chola-1.[9] The qualifications and disqualifications for contesting in assembly election is elaborately defined in this epigraph.

A few inscriptions found in Coimbatore District have helped to a great extent to solve the long debated problem of Kalabhras. These epigraphs throw welcome light to identify who the Kalabhras were and what their origin was. Kalabhras are referred to have belonged to Chandradityakula and they are specifically mentioned as Kalinirupa Kalvan. Nearly four kings of this dynasty have been identified namely Kokkandan, his sons Kokkandan Viranarayanan and Kokkandan Ravi and Ravikodai the probable son of Kokkandan Ravi. It appears that they had independently ruled over a considerable part of Kongunadu during 9-10th centuries A.D. It also seems that they had cordial relations with the early rulers of the Imperial Cholas. These rulers were not antagonists as some historians portray them. Hinduism seems to have flourished as before and a number of endowments are mentioned to have made to Hindu temples during their rule.[10]

Two inscriptions of early Pandyas are very important from the historical, political and cultural point of view. First belonging to Maran Cendan comes from Malaiyadikkuricci in Tiunelveli District.[11] This is engraved on the lintel portion of a rock - cut cave temple dedicated to

Siva. The temple was caused to be hewn out by Cattaneran, the headman of Cevur, who was the feudatory or an officer of Pandya Maran Cendan. The temple is specifically mentioned as *Karrirukkoyil* signifying the transition of temple building from brick, wood and mortar, the perishable materials to the imperishable material i.e. stone.

The second epigraph, discovered from Vaigai river bed near Madurai belongs to Maravarman Arikesari.[12] Written in 50th regnal year of him, mentions that Centan Maran had established Mangalapura as a Nagara. He is also said to have established many Agraharas, performed Mahadanas like Hiranyagarbha, Tulabhara and Gosahasra and constructed a sluice across river Vaigai and named it as Arikesariyan probably after the king.

From the above two epigraphs the following points can be deduced.

1. The movement has begun to excavate cave temples from rocks.
2. Brahmin settlements have largely been established.
3. Vedic customs and rituals such as sacrifice and gifts have been adopted.
4. Agricultural improvements such as building sluices for irrigation have been undertaken. All of them had taken place during 7th century A.D.

There are two other inscriptions which are considered to be the sheet anchor by the historians for determining the age of early Pandyas. One is engraved in a rock-cut cave at Anaimalai[13] and the other in another rock-cut cave at Tirupparankundram.[14] Both give the date of inscriptions in Kali era as well as in the regnal year of the ruling monarch. Anaimalai inscription is dated in 4871 of Kali era and in 3rd regnal year of Jatilavarman Parantaka Nedunjadaiyan while Tirupparankunram inscription is written in 4874 of Kali era and in the 6th regnal year of the same king. It is clearly understood with the help of the above two epigraphs that Nedunjadaiyan ascended the throne in 768 A.D. This date has formed as the basis for fixing the date to the predecessors and successors of Nedunjadaiyan. Another inscription[15] from Aivarmalai dated both in Saka era and regnal year of one Maranjadaiyan of later period also lends a supporting hand for fixing the date of the contemporary Pandyas.

The recently found Tiruppuvanam inscriptions of Maravarman Rajasimha reveal the cordial relations prevailed between Pandyas and Cheras during 9-10th centuries A.D.[16]

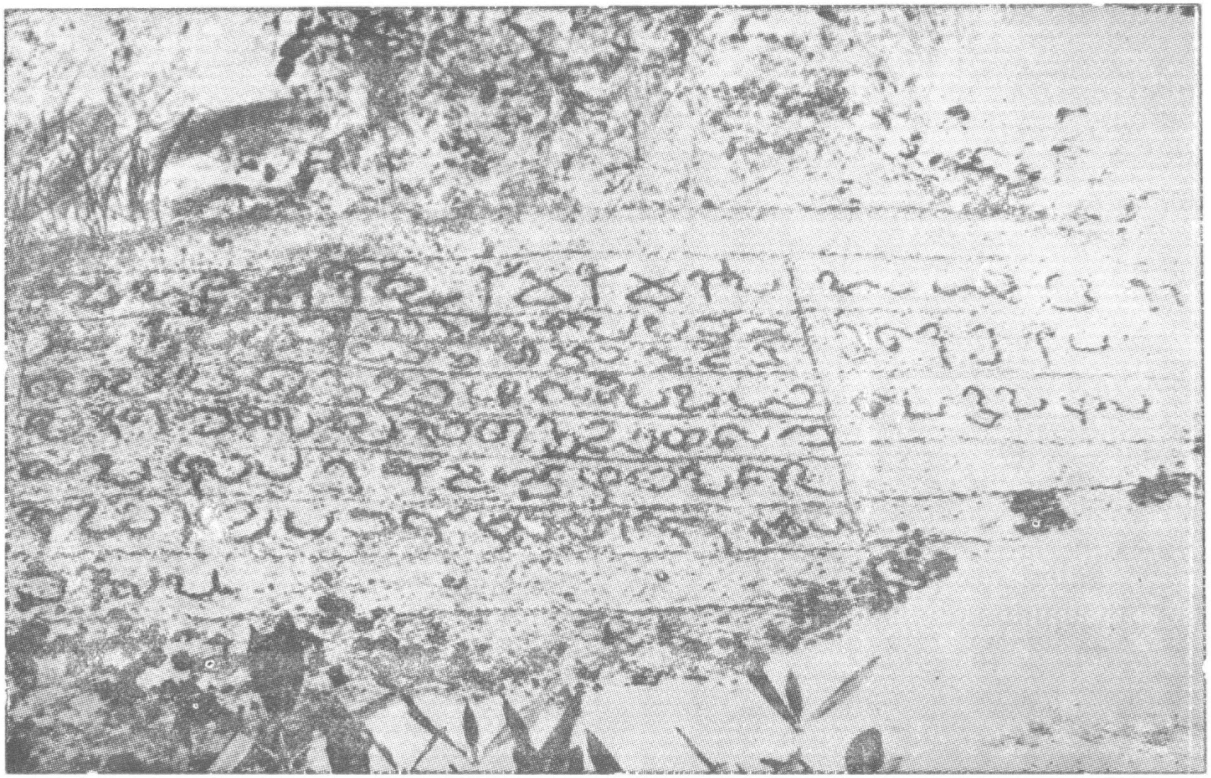
As regards the chola period, Tanjore inscriptions[17] only are sufficient to understand the social, cultural and religious aspects of Tamilnadu under chola rule. These inscriptions are engraved on the walls and pillars of Brhadeeswarar temple, Thanjavur. They had been engraved during the periods of Rajaraja I and his successors. The meykavals appointed, jewels and utensils donated, dancers and musicians employed are narrated in elaborate details. One can understand the employment system, the scale of pay to the staff, the source from which the salary paid, and the settlement of officials and royal families, from these inscriptions.

While describing the number of dancers and their native, the epigraphs enumerates the door number of the street wherein they were housed. Likewise they putforth the number of villages which were directed to depute meykavals to Tanjore temple with paddy for their wage.

The varieties of pearls and the different items of rubies are distinctly described in these inscriptions while mentioning the number of jewels endowed to the various deities. The demarcation of the land from which revenues are to be assessed and the lands that were exempted from paying dues are clearly detailed. The lands and the places that were excempted from the assessment of revenue are very interesting.

Of the thousands of inscriptions copied in Tamilnadu very few are supplying information on historical events of cholas, of which Pallavarayanpettai inscription[18] stands first. The epigraph is written in the 8th regnal year of Rajadhiraja II. The historical events narrated in this inscription is highly fascinating. It says that while Rajaraja II was in his last days of rule, he determined to select his successor. Finding that his sons were still infants being one year and two years old, he decided to choose Ediriliperumal, as heir apparent. However Rajaraja II died in the same year. Being the heir apparent also was very young, the responsibility of ruling the country fell on the trusted chief minister, Pallavarayan. After having ruled as regent for a few years he anointed Ethiriliperumal and gave him the (anointed) name Rajadhiraja II. For the trustworthy service of Pallavarayan, his wife and children were gifted the village Pallavarayanpettai for their lifelong enjoyment.

This epigraph clearly describes the chaotic situation prevailed after the death of Rajaraja II in a graphic way. It is conceived that since the sons of Rajaraja II were infants during his last days of rule he chose his sister's son Ethiriliperumal as his heir apparent. Being his sister's son also was not fit to rule the vast kingdom independently he had to depend on his chief minister Pallavarayan who was a trustworthy minister. This minister



An inscription referring to Rajakesari highway, Vellerukkampalayam, Coimbatore District.
Sundara Chola period.

seems to have saved the infants of Rajaraja II from the onslaughts of his rivals, brought the situation under control by his able stewardship and caused to anoint Edhiriliperumal as Rajadhiraja II. Hence even after his death the services of the minister were remembered by Rajadhiraja II by offering gifts to Pallavaraya's wife and children.

There is another inscription[19] in Tiruvayindipuram in South Arcot District which narrates the historical events that took place during Rajaraja III's period. It is described in this epigraph that Rajaraja III was defeated and imprisoned at Sendamangalam by Kopperunjinga, the Kadava chief. Having known the calamity met by Rajaraja III, his contemporary Hoysala ruler Viranarasimha had despatched an army under the able generals Dandikopan Jagatoppakandan Appana Tannakkan and Samuthira Koppaya Tannakkan to capture the city of Kopperunjinga and release Rajaraja III. The army is said to have captured the city and made Kopperunjinga to release chola king Rajaraja III.

The above incidents clearly indicate the deteriorating position of the Chola power and the upper hand position of the feudatories during 13th century A.D.

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1. I. Mahadevan, *Corpus of the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, Seminar on Inscriptions, 1966*. p. 72
2. Ibid p. 65
3. 7, 8, 9 of Pathirrupathu
4. Natana. Kasinathan, *Kalappirar* (Tamil) 1981, p. 20
5. Natana. Kasinathan, *Kalleluttukkalai* (Tamil) *Poolankurichi Inscription-a relook*, 1989 pp. 172-182

5A. Ibid. "Three landmark inscriptions found in Tamilnadu" pp. 183-187; Kalvettu, Quarterly Journal, TSDA, No. 20, p. 19

6. Natana. Kasinathan and K. Damodaran, *Kalvettu or Arimugam* (Tamil) p. 48
7. Dr. R. Nagaswamy - *Studies in Ancient Tamil Law and Society*, p. 15-16 1978
8. Natana. Kasinathan, *Hero-Stones in Tamilnadu* P.31
9. K. V. Subramaniya Iyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Deccan*, p. 263
10. Natana. Kasinathan, *Kalappirar*, Tamil, 1981, p. 33
11. S.I.I. Vol. XIV
12. Dr. R. Nagaswamy *Studies in Ancient Law and Society* p. 9-10
13. S.I.I. Vol. XIV
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. V. Vedachalam, *Kalvettu*, Quarterly Journal TSDA
17. S.I.I. Vol. II; Dr. R. Nagaswamy, *Tanjai Peruvudaiyar Koil Kalvettukal*, Tamil 1968
18. N. Sethuraman, *Aruludaiccola mandalam* Tamil; Pallavarayanpettai Inscription; Ep. Ind. Vol. XXI, pp. 184-193
19. Ep. Ind. Vol. VII

# 14

# Metal used as Medium of Writing

As far as India is concerned, it is believed by the archaeologists, that the Chalcolithic age preceded Iron age. Historians and the archaeologists, assign Harappan civilization (2500 to 1700 B.C.) to Chalcolithic age. Hence the use of copper was well known to Harappan people. The copper implements and the Bronze images unearthed from the Harappan sites attest the knowledge of metal usage to them. The dancing girl of Harappan civilization is the best specimen for their skill in metal casting.[1] In another way it can be interpreted that these people used furnaces for melting copper and manufactured objects that were needed to their day to day life. Likewise the early Tamils were well aware of the technique of casting metals and manufacturing objects of metals as is found from the discovery of metal objects at Adicchanallur as early as 800 B.C.[2]

However using metal as the medium of writing seems to have begun from circa 4 - 3rd century B.C. in India. The copper-plate discovered at Sohowra[3] seems to be the earliest specimen of this kind. Copper was the dominant metal used for writing while the gold, silver, bronze and iron were also used rarely.

In earlier periods it seems that the writing on metal was effected by cutting with chisel whereas in later periods the matter was written on copper plates as the plate was in molten condition. The earliest copper plate which comes from Sohowra is believed to have been prepared by using the method of casting, since the letters appear embossed.

In Tamilnadu, the practice of writing on copper plate started from Pallava and early Pandya periods. But we get references about goldsmith and ironsmith in still earlier periods. The Alagarmalai Inscription[4] in Brahmi characters, assignable to second century B.C. refers to goldsmith. Likewise we get reference to ironsmith and his duty of manufacturing war weapons from Sangam literature.[5]

Specific instances of furnaces for melting iron come from copper plates. They refer the ironsmith as "Perumpanaikaran" and 'Perunkollan'.[6] Perumpanai here indicates the furnace. Some of the ironsmiths themselves were the court poets, who had composed prasastis and engraved them on copper plates.[7]

Copper was predominantly used for writing royal orders of gifts. One poet eulogizes his patron that there was shortage of copper in his country, since his patron had used all stocks of copper for issuing large number of copper plates describing the gifts of lands. It is not a mere praise but it is a fact which is attested by the discovery of large number of copper plates from different parts of India.

In Venkatachalapathy temple of Tirupathi alone it is said that about three thousands copper plates are stored. In Ranganatha temple of Srirangam also there are considerable number of copper plates of Vijayanagar and Nayak periods.[8] The mutts in Tamilnadu are also in possession of large number of copper plates dealing with the gifts of lands.[9]

The copper plates were issued in different sizes. Of all the ruling dynasties of India, Cholas stood first in issuing copper plates consisting more leaves. The famous larger Laiden copper plates[10] of Rajaraja I consists of twenty one leaves while the Tiruvalangadu copper plate[11] of Rajendra Chola I consists of thirty one leaves weighing seven thousand nine hundred and eight tola. Of all the copper plates of Cholas Karantai plates[12] of Rajendra Chola I is the one which has more number of leaves numbering to fifty five, weighing eight thousand six hundred and forty five tola, i.e. more than nine Manangu.

The shape of the most of the copper plates are very similar to palm leaves whereas a few of the copper plates are square and rectangular in shape. The largest size of the copper plate comes from Suge Vihara of the period of Kanishka. It is square in shape measuring two and a half feet in length, and breadth. Two copper plates available in Ranganatha Temple at Srirangam come next in size. The smallest copper plate is the Sohowra copper plate measuring about two and a half inches in length and one and three fourth in breadth.

Some objects of copper were also used for writing. One plough of copper belonging to 18-19th centuries A.D. is bearing scripts in Tamil character.[13]

Tamilnadu is unique in having masterpieces of bronze Icons some of which bear the description of the donor of the image and the regnal year and name of the ruling monarch.[14]

The seals found on the ring of the copper plates were made out of casting. They reveal the expertise achieved by the braziers of those period, in the technique of drawing the figures, preparing mould and casting figures. While adding more leaves for a grant they took meticulous care to protect the letters written on the leaves from the scratches and defacement by raising the rims on all sides of each leaf.

Copper plates of Nayak period and after have some special features. They bear the religious as well as secular figures embossed or engraved on them. This shows that the plate and the figures have been casted first and the script was engraved later. On some plates the implements that were used by goldsmith, blacksmith and brazier are found embossed with their tutelar deity. The study of these figures could throw welcome light on the social and religious aspects of the artisan's life.

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1. Walter A. Fairservis, J R. *The Routs of Ancient India*, p. 279
2. '*Adichanallur Bronze*'' Paramasivan S. in PISCA 1933 p.413.
3. Sircar D.C. *Indian Epigraphy* p.107, Epi. Ind. Vol. XXII
4. Iravatham Mahadevan *Corpus of the Brahmi Inscriptions* in Seminar on Inscription (Ed) R. Nagaswamy p.63
5. *Purananuru* 95,312
6. *The Pandyan Copper Plates ten* pp. 32-115
7. Ibid. p.115.
8. The copper plates belonging to Sri Ranganatha temple are exhibited in the temple Museum, Ranganathar temple, Srirangam.
9. Ep. In. Volumes, XIV, XVI to XVIII.
10. Ep. In. Vol. 34 p. 223
11. S.I.I. Vol. III No. 205
12. *Karandai Tamil Sangam Plates of Rajendra Chola* edited by K. G. Krishnan, Memoris of the Archaeological survey of India No. 79
13. It is in the correction of Thiru. S. Rajam (late), Madras; Krishnan K. G., *Studies in South Indian History and Epigraphy* Wrapper page.
14. Natana. Kasinathan *Thirumenikal Thirupparikalankal mitu eluthukkal* in Kalvettu (quarterly journal) No.8 (Tamil) p.4.

# 15

## Tirucchengodu Copper Plate Grants - A study

Two copper plates grants, obtained from Mr. Muthusamy Konar of Tirucchengodu, were reported in the Annual Report on Epigraphy for the year 1913-14 by H. Krishna Sastri. The photographs of the plates and the texts were published.[1]

The first grant, written on both sides of a single plate, is dated in the 10th year of the reign of King Kovi Rajakesarivarman. It records an order of one of the feudatory chiefs of the sovereign named Malavaraiyan Sundara Cholan, stating that taxes on full house-sites and half house-sites shall be recovered at 1/4th and 1/8th (probably pon or kasu) respectively from the citizens of Tusiyur and that fines and faults, if any, shall be realised at the rate prevailing in Nandhipuram.

The second grant, engraved on three copper-plates, the last bearing writing only on the inner side is dated in the fifth year of the reign of King Kovi Rajakesarivarman. It registers a gift of land made by a chief, Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piradikandavarman, to the temple of Paramesvara of the sacred Mulasthana at Tusiyur. Both these plates are assigned to Rajaraja I.

The points of interest in these two grants are;

1. The identification of Kovi Rajakesarivarman
2. The relationship of Kollimalavan Orriyuran and Malavaraiyan Sundara Cholan.
3. The date of Sri Lanka (On Ilam) battle mentioned in the first grant.
4. Participation of Kollimalavan and Sundara Cholan in that battle.

**Identification of Kovi Rajakesarivarman**

The palaeography of the first inscription and the name of the feudatory, Malavaraiyan Sundara Cholan mentioned in it suggest that Kovi Rajakesarivarman was the same as Sundara Cholan, the father of Rajaraja I. The characters of these plates are clearly earlier than those of Rajaraja's inscriptions.

**The relationship of Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan and Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan.**

The second part of the first grant states that Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan made a "sirupadu" and gave it to the lord of the sacred stone temple at Tusiyur for appeasing the thirst of the spirit of his father, who had been killed while fighting in Ilam.

The Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan could be identified with Kollimalavan Sundara Cholan of the first grant, which was issued in the 10th regnal year of Kovi Rajakesarivarman, and Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan could have been the son of Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan of the other grant, which was issued in the fifth regnal year of King Kovi Rajakesarivarman, since the suffix, Piratikandan of Orriyuran, appears as the prefix of Sundara Cholan, the father, to appease the thirst of whose spirit Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan made a grant, was apparently Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan.

Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan is mentioned in the fifth regnal year of the King and Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan appears in the 10th regnal year of the same king. So it is obvious that in the 10th regnal year Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan was not alive. Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan made grants for his "great thirst" (Srimataham). This fact gives a clue to the date of the battle that took place in Ilam. i.e. the 10th regnal year or before that of Kovi Rajakesarivarman.

**Participation of Kollimalavan Sundara Cholan in the Sri Lanka battle :**

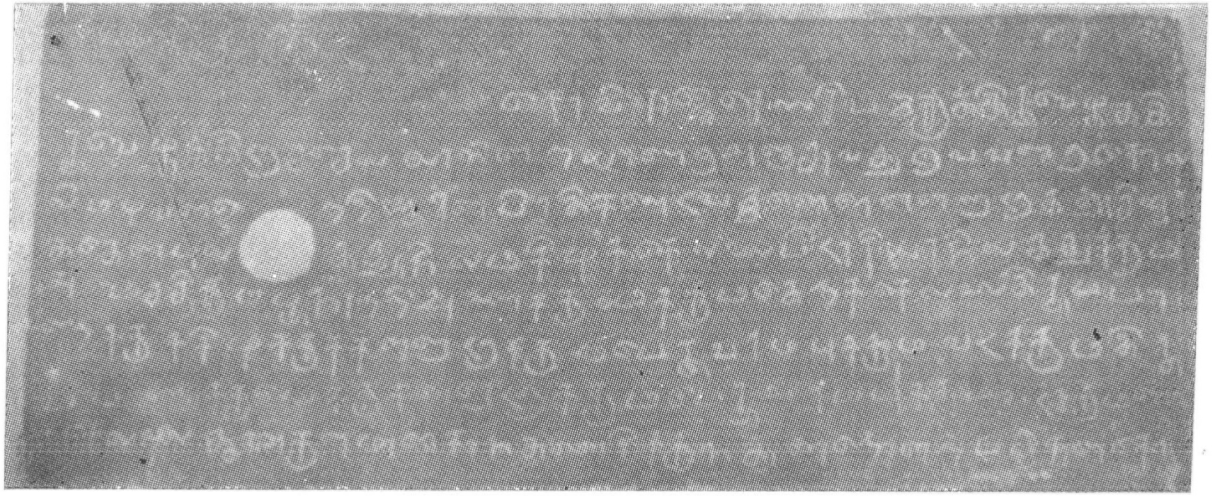
An inscription[2] of the ninth regnal year (i.e. 965 A.D.) of Sundara Cholan refers to the expedition to the island led by Siriyavelar of Kodumbalur and his death in the battlefield. It is possible that Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan also fought in that battle and lost his life. Since this happened in the ninth regnal year of Sundara Chola,[2] his son Piratikandan Sundara Cholan made a grant in the next year for appeasing the "great thirst" of his, father, Orriyuran Piratikandan's spirit.

**Conclusions :**

On the above analysis the following conclusions can be arrived at:

1. The Tirucchengodu copper plate grants are of Sundara Chola's period and not that of Rajaraj I, as held by earlier scholars.

2. The order of their issue should be arranged as follows: the grant issued in the fifth regnal year must be placed first and the grant issued in the 10th regnal year next.



Thiruchengodu Copper Plate, Sundara Chola period, 10th century A.D.

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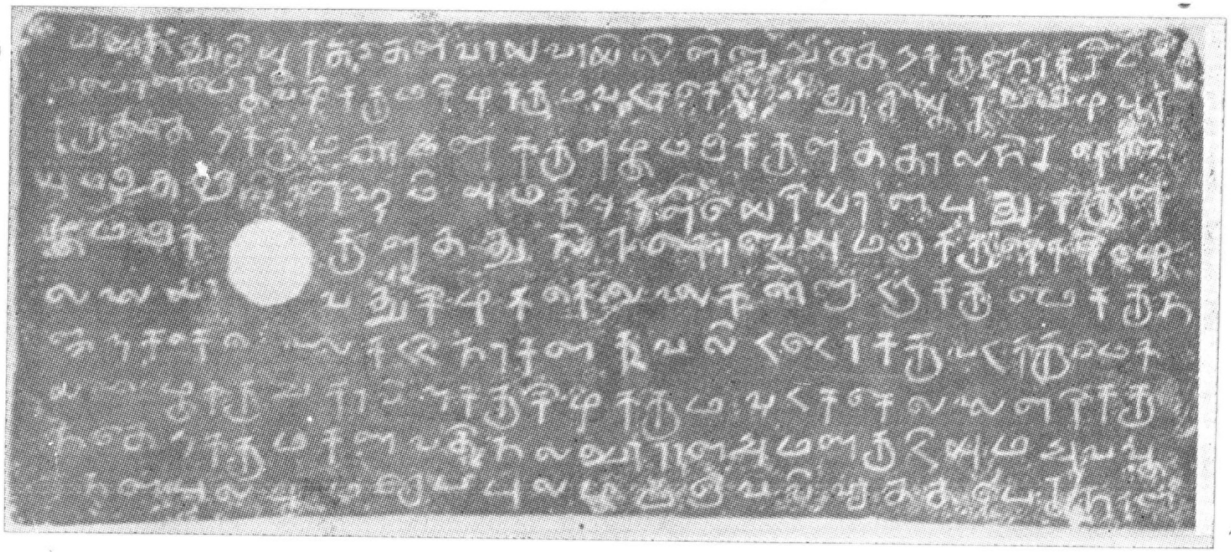
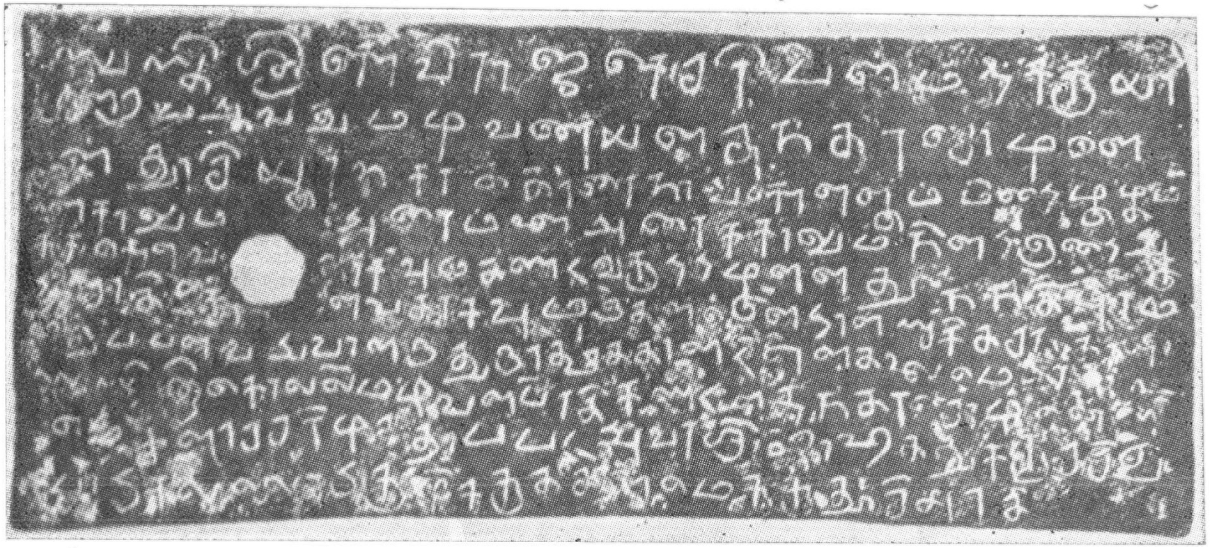
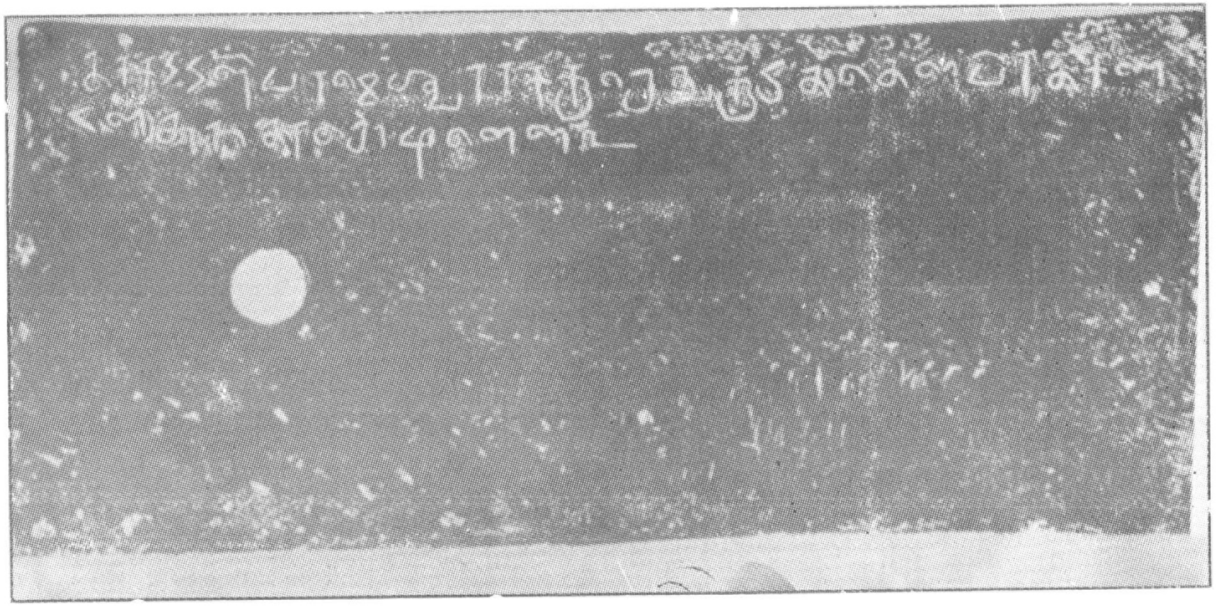


Thiruchengodu Copper Plate, Sundarachola period, 10th century A.D.

Thiruchengodu Copper plate, Sundara Chola period, 10th century A.D.



Thiruchengodu Copper Plate, Sundara Chola Period, 10th century A.D.



Thiruchengodu Copper Plate, Sundara Chola period, 10th century A.D.

3. Malavaraiyan Sundara Cholan and Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan are the same person.

4. Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan of the grant issued in the fifth year was the father of Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan of the grant issued in the 10th year.

5. The father of Kollimalavan Piratikandan Sundara Cholan who was killed at Ilam was none other than Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan to appease the great thirst of whose spirit he made grant.

6. Kollimalavan Orriyuran Piratikandan fought in the Ilam battle., where the chola army was led by Siriyavelar of Kodumbalur and died in the ninth regnal year of Sundara Cholan.

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1. S. I. I. Vol. III. p. 479
2. K. A. Nilakanta Sastry, *The colas*, Published in 1955, p. 154; ARE 116 of 1896, ARE 1914, II Part, Para 15.

# 16

## Education in Ancient Tamilnadu

Considering the volume of literature assignable to Sangam age it is easy to conceive that there must have been a well established system of education. The education was common to both male and female. There were number of excellent poems said to have sung not only by male poets but also by female poetesses. Kakkaipadiniyar,[1] Naccellaiyar,[2] and the illustrious Avvaiyar[3] were the celebrated poetesses of Sangam period. Their poems are equally important as the poems sung by male poets namely Mamoolanar,[4] Paranar,[5] Mangudi Maruda nar etc.[6] Those poets and poetesses were reverently held by the then monarchs and they even acted on the advise of those poets. Poets and poetesses had played significant role at times of war and peace. Some of the poets and poetesses were appointed as poet-laureate. Avvaiyar was the court poetess of King Atiyaman,[7] while Mangudi Marudanar was the court poet of Pandyas.[8]

It was generally held that the foremost duty of every father was to educate his son, as it was the duty of a mother to foster, of an ironsmith to manufacture weapons and of a ruler to rule the country in justice.[9]

Though we get considerable references to poets, poetesses and a few on teacher, it is distressing to note that there is no reference about a primary school or an institution which imparted education either from literature or from the chronicles of foreigners who visited Tamilnadu during the beginning of the Christian era.

We get references on the academy of poets.[10] In the said academy it seems that scholarly discussions were held on the poems composed newly by the poets. But it is not known how the education was imparted, either at rural level or at urban level. It is presumed that Gurukulam was the only means in those days to educate the children of all strata.

Coming to Pallava period we hear of a Ghatika[11] located at Kanchi where the Kadamba king Mayurasarman is said to have come along with his guru to have his higher learning. This Ghatika seems to be a centre of higher education during Pallava period. It was esteemly held by the

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rulers as they claim that they have annexed this institution with them.[12] Even here it is not clear what subjects were taught in this Ghatika, who were the teachers and how many students were taught. But one thing is clear that the students from other Kingdoms also came to this Ghatika to equip more knowledge. An inscription[13] of Vaikuntaperumal temple of Kanchi tells that the madyastas of Ghatika were present when Nandivarma Pallavamalla was coronated as king of Pallava kingdom. Hence it is evident that the persons of Ghatika also had a say in the selection of persons for becoming the rulers of the kingdom. It seems that they were given this kind of respect because of their scholarship.

Ghatika was interpreted in different meaning by different scholars. The most acceptable meaning is that it was an educational institution where the Vedas and allied subjects were taught and an intellectual examination was conducted to test the proficiency of the scholars in the Vedas by asking questions through ballot papers which were put inside a Ghata or a Pot.[14] Ghatika is also referred to in inscriptions as Ghatikasthana and Ghatikasalai.

The Chola inscriptions throw more light on the system of education prevailed in Tamilnadu from 10th to 13th century A.D. We get solid references to the educational institutions from three places namely Tirumukkudal, Ennayiram and Triubhuvani. All the three places are situated in Tondainadu which is celebrated in a proverb that the "Thondainadu Canror Udaittu" (Thondainadu possesses of scholars). This proverb appears to be quite appropriate and convincing as this part of Tamilnadu paid more attention on the encouragement of education.

Another important factor is that the above three educational institutions were invariably attached with Vishnu temples. This fact indicates that the devotees of Vishnu were more eager in learning the Vedas, Vyakaranam and Mimamsa and also the agamas of Pancharatra and Vaikanasa. Siva agamas were also imparted in these institutions. It is not known why the Siva temples did not pay their attention on the teaching of Vedas and Agamas relating to Saivism. Perhaps they should have endeavoured in promoting Tamil literature and arranging facilities for reciting Devaram and Tiruvisaippa. But no authentic reference has so far come in this regard.

In the above Vishnu temples arrangements seem to have made for reciting Tiruvaymozhi[15] but the educational institutions attached with them had not imparted any Tamil literature. The association of a Tamil scholar

with a Ghatika is known from a solitary reference of an inscription engraved on the south wall of the outer prakara of Kaccapesvarar temple at Tirukkacciyur in Chengalpattu District.[16]

This epigraph records that Poyyamozhimangalam was the proprietary village of a certain Perunambi, a descendant of Sattanar who, among the learned members of the institution (Kadikai) of that village was entitled Muttamilacharyar alias Tamil Karaikandavar, well versed in the Tamil language. Another inscription of the same temple mentions the names of a few scholars of the Kadikai who were well versed in Tamil language and literature. One of the members is called as Poyyamoli Tamilvelan.

It would be an absorbing interest to look into the details of the three above institutions. The Vedic college at Ennayiram attached with Rajaraja Vinnagar temple stands first in the chronological order as it is known from an inscription[17] of Rajendra I datable to the first quarter of 11th century A.D. It is known from an inscription that by the kings order 45 velis of land in Anangur alias Rajarajanallur was given to Rajaraja Vinnagar (Alagiyasinga Perumal temple) by the Mahasabha of the taniyur of Rajarajacaturvedimangalam (Ennayiram) for offerings, festivals, the recitation of Tiruvaymoli, the maintenance of an institution of higher learning for teaching the Vedas, Vyakaranam, Mimamsa and Vedanta.

As per the details of the inscriptions the following decisions or the Mahasabha can be culled out.

1. Four persons are to be appointed for the recitation of Tiruvaymozhi hymns in the temple.

2. Twenty five Sri-Vaishnavas are to be fed.

3. Sixty Kalams of Paddy and three Kalanju of gold are to be deposited in order to feed one thousand Srivaishnavas and dasas (devotees)

4. The following students studying different subjects are to be fed in the Gangaikondan mandapa.

a) 75 studying the Rig-Veda
b) 75 studying the Yajur Veda
c) 20 studying the Chandoga sama
d) 20 studying the Talavakara sama
e) 20 studying the Vajasaneya
f) 10 studying the Atharva.
g) 10 studying the Baudhayaniya Grihyakalpa and Gana
h) 25 learning the Vyakarana
i) 35 learning the Prabhakara and
j) 10 persons learning the Vedanta.

The teachers were appointed to teach the subjects mentioned above.
Three to teach the Rig-Veda
Three to teach the Yajur Veda
One to teach the Chandoga sama
One to teach the Talavakara sama
One to teach the Vajasaneya
One to teach the Baudhayaniya, Grihya, Kalpa and *Kathaka*

In the above mentioned provisions it is conspicous that no Tamil literature was taught and no teacher was appointed to teach Tamil subjects.

The institution attached with Viranarayana Vinnagar Alwar of Tribhuvani comes next. The inscription[18] which narrates the details of the gift endowed by Senapati Mavali Vanarayan for the health of King Rajendra Chola, had been engraved in the 30th regnal year of the Rajadhiraja I son of Rajendra Chola. The date corresponds to 1048 A.D. The grant provided for the conduct of festivals, for the recitation of Tiruvaymoli and for the maintenance of Vedic college. The details of the provision made for educational institution is as follows:-

1. A total strength of 19 teachers to be appointed. 3 for teaching Rigveda, 3 for Yajurveda, 1 to teach Chandogasama, Talavakara sama, Apurva, Vajasaneya Boudhayaniya and Styashta sutra, 1 each for expounding Vedanta, Vyakarana, Rupavatara, Ramayana, Bharata, Manusastra and Vaikhanasa sastra.
2. A total strength of 260 students are to be admitted for studying different subjects. 60 students for Rigveda, 60 for Yajurveda, 20 for Chandogasama, 50 for other sastras and 70 for Vedanta, Vyakarana and Rupavatara.

For the annual maintenance of this institution 9525 Kalam of paddy was provided.

The third institution[19] was located at Tirumukkudal. This is referred to in an inscription of Virarajendra written in his 6th regnal year i.e. 1069 A.D. The main object of this record is to provide for the maintenance of worship to Sri Raghava Chakravartin of Venkatesa perumal temple and for the running of vedic college with an attached hostel and a hospital.

The gift consists of provisions for a teacher teaching Rigveda at the rate of 60 kalam of paddy and 4 kasu per annum, a teacher for Yajurveda also on a similar remuneration and a Bhatta for expounding Vyakarana and Rupavatara drawing an annual income of 120 kalam of paddy and

10 kasu. It is also known from the provisions made to the temple that ten students studied the Rig veda; the Yajur veda and twenty including certain number of Bramanas, the Vyakarana and Rupavatara.

There were also some educational institutions in extreme south of Tamilnadu, one in Chera country and another in Ay country. Both were identical in the sytem of teaching. The institution of Chera country was located at Kandalur which is identified with Valiasalai near Trivandrum. It was a famous one as is referred to both in Tamil literature and in the inscriptions of Chola period. Rajaraja the great boasts himself of conquering this institution in his Meykirti. A few of his successors and some Pandya kings also claim that they had conquered over this. The true nature of this institution was not understood till the discovery of Partivasekarapuram copper plates. With the discovery of Partivesekarapuram plate it is known that the educational institution of Partivasekarapuram was established on the model of the institution at Kandalur. The details of the functioning of the Partivasekarapuram institution is explained in the copper plates. Hence it has become possible to presume the true nature of the instituion of Kandalur also.

The institution of Partivasekarapuram was established by Karunandadakkan, Ay king of Venadu on the model of the one existed at Kandalur. This institution also seems to have been attached with a Vishnu temple known as Vishnubattaraka. The copper plate narrates that necessary provision was made to study Pavilya Charana by 45 members, Taittriya Charana by 35 members, and Talavakara by 14 members. The students to be admitted in this institution are called Cattars. Some rules and regulations to be followed by those who are admitted in this educational institution are given in detail.

Kandalur institution may also have been functioning in the same line. It is possible that Kandalur institution may also have been attached. with the Vishnu temple most probably with Padmanaba temple of Tiruvanandapuram.

It is evident from the foregoing narrations that all these institutions had imparted only the Vedic studies and were invariably attached with the Vishnu temples. It may be presumed that the Siva temples and mutts attached to them may have promoted Tamil studies as we have evidences from Kaccabesvarar temple, Kanchipuram.

1. Puram No. 278
2. Kurunthogai No. 210
3. 90 songs sung by Avvaiyar are found in Sangam Anthology.

4. Narrinai No. 14, 75
5. Puram No. 4
6. Mangudi Marudanar - Kurunthogai No. 164
7. Avvaiyar - Puram No. 91
8. Mangudi Marudanar - Maduraikanchi
9. Puram No. 312
10. Maduraikanchi Verse 761-62
11. S. Gurumurthy, *Education in South India* pp. 6-7
12. S.I.I. Vol II p. 508; ll 12-13
13. C. Meenakshi, *Historical Sculptures of Vaikunda Perumal Temple, Kanchi.*
14. S. Gurumurthy, *Education in South India* pp. 4-5
15. A.R.E. 1917, No. 343, Report for 1917-18, part II, para 28, pp. 145-146.
16. A.R.E. 1932-33, No. 51 and 30 of 1909
17. A.R.E. 1912 - part (ii) para 65
18. A.R.E. 1918-19 No. 176; part (ii) para 18, pp. 96-98.
19. E. I. Vol. IXX, No. 38

# 17

## Mahasivaratri

Mahasivaratri was an important festival for the Saivites as Vaikunta Ekadasi for Vaishnavites. Mahasivaratri falls on the 14th day of Aparapaksha in the Tamil month Masi.

Tradition has it that a devout should eat only for a session on the eve of Sivaratri and should observe a full day fast on Sivaratri day without a wink of sleep and such observance will redeem the pious from any sin committed knowingly or inadvertently.

During the deluge Parvati did penance towards Siva and requested him to save the remaining creatures of the world that survived the deluge and also to grant them moksha if they worship him one full night observing the fast without sleep. Lord Siva accordingly granted Parvati's wish. That night which Parvati requested siva for the welfare of creatures of the world was later came to be called Maha Sivaratri.

There are five Sivaratris in a whole year. They are respectively the Mahasivaratri, Yoga Sivaratri. Nitya Sivaratri, Paksha Sivaratri and Monthly Sivaratri.

The Puranas have codified the observance of the Sivaratri penance. The Sivaratri night is to be divided into four equal parts (jama) and each jama is to be worshipped differently.

In the first jama, Lord Siva is to be worshipped by lotus flowers with the chanting of Rig veda and sweet pongal is to be offered.

In the second phase, Lord Siva is to be propitiated by Tulasi leaves to the chanting of Yajur veda and sweet payasam to be offered.

In the third jama, Siva is to be worshipped by Bilva leaves to the chanting of Sama veda and salted Pongal is to be offered as naivedya.

In the fourth and last jama, Lord Siva must be worshipped by lily flowers to the chanting of Atharvana veda and pure cooked rice is to be given as offering.

Several Pauranic legends extoll the significance of Mahasivaratri. Of them the anecdote of a hunter is worth recording. One day a hunter went on a hunting expedition in a forest for his daily food needs. No wild animal was spotted by him despite day long search. When on sun set while he was returning dejected and empty handed, a tiger chased him. To escape from tiger's fury, he climbed a tree and sat on a branch. The tiger too stayed near the tree in the fond hope that he would come down. Without knowing what to do, the hunter plucked the leaves of the tree and dropped them one by one. The tree he was perched was no other than the Bilva tree. Each dropped leaf fell on the Linga that lied under the tree and near the tiger. Without food and without winking his eyelids the hunter worshipped Siva. Such an act of the hunter earned Lord Siva's grace so goes the Pauranic account.

This anecdote is still performed in a dramatic version in some parts of Tamilnadu. This episode is being enacted even to-day under the title 'Veda Natakam" in Pudupet near Madurantakanallur in Chidambaram Taluk of South Arcot District. The play is written by a famous drama actor Jagannathan of this village. The story of the play is as follows:

"In a village there lives a hunter by name Vilvavanavedan (hunter of the Bilva forest). He lives with his wife and two sons. They are the staunch devotees of Lord Siva. One day the hunter goes on hunting expedition in the forest. No wild animal is encountered by him. By that time another hunter meets him. (The Second hunter is none other than Lord Siva) The latter tells him that his name is Maruthavana Vedan (hunter of the Marutha forest) and accosts him to go to his forest to hunt many wild animals. The two hunters reach Maruthavana. A flock of deer passes by. Vilvavana hunter attempts to slay them. But Maruthavana hunter desists him saying that these antelops adorn the left hand of Siva. So these shall not be killed. Likewise the Maruthavana hunter prevents him saying one reason or another for other animals. In the end the two hunters depart and prepare to hunt in different directions.

To test the Vilvavana hunter, Lord Siva who first appeared as the Maruthavana hunter, now takes the form of a tiger. Vilvavana hunter attacks the tiger. The tiger eludes his arrows and attacks him. The hunter petrified by this, climbes a tree and sits on its branch. The tiger does not leave him. It lies down with the fond hope that he has to come down at a later time. Dark falls. The hunter having not eaten anything for that day and keeping a night long vigil over the tiger, plucks the leaves of the Bilva tree and drops them one by one praying Lord Siva. At the same time the wife of the hunter too prays Lord Siva. At day break, the tiger vanishes and in its place a Linga is found. The Lord Siva along with his consort Parvati, grace Vilvavana hunter, his wife and two sons."

This pauranic episode is picturesquely painted in the ceiling of a mantapa in front of the central shrine of the Tirumangaikkudi Siva temple, Kumbakonam taluk of Thanjavur district.

In the first part, is depicted a hunter wearing a leather garment and leather hat, with a bow in his right hand and arrow quill on his shoulder. He is portrayed standing in front of a linga. Besides the linga stands Paravati wearing lengthy garland. This scene depicts Vilvavana hunter as a staunch devotee of Siva.

In the next scene two hunters are portrayed. One bears a bow in the right hand and the other in the left hand. This scene shows that both the Vilvavana and Marudavana hunters as preparing for hunting.

The next scene shows two galloping deers indicating that the hunters had reached the forest and animals are running hither and thither.

The next phase, shows the deer in fast run. One hunter is shown aiming an arrow with his left leg bent and right leg placed forcibly on the earth. This indicates that the Vilvavana hunter attempts to shoot at the galloping antelopes.

The next scene shows the hunter aiming an arrow at a prancing tiger. This scene reminds us of the change in form of the Marudavana hunter into a tiger.

The next panel is covered by whitewash.

In the last panel, the hunter, his wife and two sons are portrayed as worshipping the linga. This scene shows that Lord Siva is pleased with the hunter's devotion and showers his Grace to him and his family.

These panel paintings were done in green, dark red, yellow and white pigments. The style of the execution and the labelled inscription beneath each episode, clearly point the Mahratta period Art idiom. These paintings were the endowment of Bhumipalagan Kumara Swaminatha Pillai, son of Kannangudai Ponnambala Pillai. The artist of the painting was referrred to as Vengapa Nayakkar son of...nankkar. On the whole, this painting brings to our knowledge that Maha Sivaratri festival was celebrated in elegant manner and was indeed quite popular in Mahratta reign during 18-19th centuries.

That Mahasivaratri was celebrated in Tamilnadu in as early as 700 to 800 years ago has been testified by inscriptions.

A 24th year record of Vira Rajendra Chola in the Vijayamangalam[1] Nagesvaraswami temple of Coimbatore district, records the endowment made to the temple for burning 900 lamps on the Sivaratri festival.

The doorjamb inscription of the Tampirattiyamman temple of Cholamadevi[2], in Coimbatore district dated in the 24th regnal year of Vikramachola refers to the grant of gold for the celebration of Sivaratri festival in the Rajarajeswaram Udaiyar temple of Viracholapuram.

An inscription of Rajaraja III engraved on the outer western wall of the central shrine of the Ratnagireeswara temple in Ratnagiri[3] of Tiruchirapalli District refers to the gift of 1000 kasu for Sivaratri festival in the temple.

An agreement is recorded on the west wall of the mantapa in front of the central shrine in the Madhyasthanathesvara temple at Tirupparkadal at the time of Rajaraja III. It is mentioned that an agreement was given to Viranam Udaiyan Tirukkutturai Udaiyan alias Alangarappiriyan by three Sivabrahmanas to supply the necessary articles for the worship of the God on Sivaratri day in the month of Masi. The articles that are to be supplied are enumerated as follows; salt, pepper, el, honey, ghee, milk, jaggery, kalnelli, manjal, arecanut, betal leaves, oil for lamp, gomiyam, gomutram etc.[4]

A lithic record from Vedaranyam records the sale of five veli of land for 200 panam by the Adichandesvara devakanmis of the Tirumaraikkadu temple to Vedam Odinar Puliyur Nattu Velar who made a gift of it to God Tambiranar of the same temple for conducting Sivaratri festival. This record is written in saka 1386 corresponding to 1465 A.D. during the period of Prabudhadeva Maharaya.[5]

The festival was celebrated in the year 1884 at Chulai in Madras. A solitary record from Chidambesvarar Devasthanam, Chulai states that Venkatesa Mudaliar and his wife had installed an image of Nataraja on the auspicious day of Mahasivarathri and endowed some gift for performing daily poojas and annual festivals.[6]

A modi script manuscript[7] in the Tanjore Saraswathi Mahal Library tells us that Sivaratri festival was celebrated with great jubilation during Mahratta rule.

To remain awaken throughout the night, the woman folk played certain games. It seems that money was used in those games. The manuscript refers to some such event as follows:

For games towards the Masi month Sivarathri money was paid to the following persons

To Chow Rajamma Chakram 10 Kasu 500

To Upalampa Chak 10 Kasu 500

To Chararekabayee Panam, 7 1/2

To other Bhai Saheb etc. Chak 500 Kasu 14,000

This Mahasivaratri festival is still observed in Saivaite centres such as Kalahasti, Tirugokarnam, Rameswaram, Tiruvaikavur and Omampuliyur etc.

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1. A.R.E. 584/1905
2. Ibid. 242/1909
3. Ibid. 155/1914
4. S.I.I. Vol. XVII
5. S.I.I. Vol. XVII, No. 531
6. *Chennai Manakark Kalvettukal*, TSDA No. 215/1967
7. Venkataramayya, K. M. "*Tanjai Marattiya Mannarkala Araciyalum Camudaya Vazhkkaiyum*", p. 315, Tamil University Publications (1984), (Tamil) Tanjavur.

# 18

# Kalabhras

The history of Tamilnadu is traceable even from the pre-historic period. But history based on recorded evidence starts from the Sangam period which is fixed by eminent scholars like K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, the doyen of Chola historical studies, from the first century A.D. to the third. Even after the Sangam period there is a gap which is yet to be filled with authentic evidence. This gap is termed as the 'dark period' or the "Kalabhra interregnum". The authority for so naming the period is available in the Velvikkudi copper-plate which states that Kadungon, the illustrious Pandya king, is said to have uprooted the Kalabhras who had occupied a large area after having driven out innumerable earlier rulers. On this basis scholars suppose that the Kalabhras might have ruled the Tamil country from the third century A.D. to the sixth. From the latter part of six century A.D. began the tremendous rule of the Pandyas beginning with Kadungon in the southern part of Tamilnadu and of the Pallavas beginning with Simhavishnu in the northern.

Who were the Kalabhras? Were they indigenous people or foreigners? How long did they rule Tamilnadu? Is it a fact that they were completely extinguished in the sixth century? These are some of the questions that induce the historians to do further research. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar,[1] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri,[2] Sadasiva Pandarattar,[3] K. R. Venkataraman[4] and others attempted a few studies on the origin of the Kalabhras. Recently some linguists like Seeni Venkataswamy[5] and Pannirselvam[6] have analysed the problems and tried to give a connected account, but they do not pay their attention beyond the sixth century. M.Arunachalam[7] in an endowment lecture at the University of Madras has described the impediments caused by the Kalabhras during Pandya rule in southern Tamil country. Recent discoveries of epigraphs make it possible to write the history of the Kalabhras even beyond the sixth century and solve some of the problems.

There are different theories about the origin of the Kalabhras. Some scholars are of the opinion that they were indigenous[8]. Others argue that they had migrated to the Tamil country from the southern part of Karnataka.[9] There is also another school of thought which says

that some of the Kalabhras were indigenous and the others foreigners[10] Depending upon the words "Kalabhras" and "Kalappalar" which occur in later inscriptions, Sadasiva Pandarathar says that the Kalabhras were foreigners who came from the north and that the Kalappalars were the indigenous. To substantiate his theory he pointed out that there is a place called Kalappal in Tanjore district where the indiginous Kalabhras are believed to have originated. His theory has become unacceptable after the discovery of the Dalavaipuram coppcr plates where the Kalabhras are mentioned as Kalappazhar which can also be spelt as Kalappalar.

K. P. Aravanan introduces a theory that the Kalabhras were Tamils and not any outsiders.[11] He has not given any authentic evidence to support his theory. The theory that the Kalabhras came from outside the Tamil country gained more support. Being a pioneer of this theory, S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar said that the Kalabhras came south due to the expansion of the Satavahana power and he derived "Kalabhra" from "Kalavara" through Kanarese "Kalabharu".[12] Considering all the above theories, it seems plausible to say that the Kalabhras came from southern Karnataka. During the fifth century A.D. the area around Sravanabelgola, in Karnataka was known as 'Kalapappu nadu'.[13] According to "Vattaradane", a Jain work, the Maurya king Chandragupta, the grandfather of emperor Asoka came south and settled down on the mountain of Kalabappu after abdication. Chandragiri in Karnataka was called Kalabappupedda in olden days. Therefore it is quite possible that the Kalabhras originated in the surrounding places of Sravanabelgola. Later they migrated to Nandi hills in Kolar and Venkada hills in Tamilnadu. There they became petty chieftains of small areas.

The first reference to Kalabhra king comes from a Tamil anthology called Ahananuru which says that Pulli, King of Kalvar, was the possesser of Venkadam hills.[14] Since "Ahananuru" is datable not later than the third century A.D., Pulli is believed to have ruled the Venkadam hills and its surroundings in that century or even before. He is also said in the same poem to have conquered Malanadu.[15] Malanadu was adjacent to the Venkadam hills. So it is quite possible that he could have subdued the neighbouring King. Literature says that Malanadu was ruled over by the Atiya kings. Atiyaman Neduman Anji, an illustrious Malava ruler who is said to have patronised the famous poetess Avvaiyar, was the ruler during the Sangam age. So Pulli, the Kalabhra king may have defeated any one of the successors of Athiyaman. Venkadam is mentioned in literature as the border area between Tamilnadu and the region of Vadugar (Molipeyardeyam). Vadugar may mean either the Telugu or Kannada speaking people. However, it may be

presumed that it was the place where different people lived and mingled with one another. But it can be said with certainty that Pulli was a Tamil king or at least a Tamil knowing king because the Tamil poets had eulogised him in a considerable number of Tamil poems.

The victory over the Malavas may have coincided with the downfall of the three great Tamil emperors. So there was no king strong enough to arrest the onslaught of the Kalabhras southwards. Consequently there was a Kalabhra king by name Achyutan ruling over the Chola country in the fifth century A.D. The Kadamba king Kahuttan is said to have been fearful enemy to the Kalabhras according to the inscription found at Halmidi.[16] Kahuttan is believed to have ruled in the fifth century A.D. So the Kalabhras referred to in the Halmidi inscription may have been either the Kalabhra king Achyutan or a branch of the Kalabhras who were in Karnataka.

Buddhadatta, a buddhist monk, living in the Chola country says in one of his great works Vinayavinichchayam, that the work was written while he was staying in a Vihara built by Venudasar in Bhutamangalam in the Chola country in the reign of the illustrious king Acchyuta Vikkantan, who belonged to the Kalabhra dynasty.[17] Buddhadatta was a contemporary of a Sri Lanka king Srikuttan, who was ruling in the fifth century A.D. Buddhagoshar, a Buddhist monk and contemporary of Buddhadatta, also refers to Accyutavikkantan ruling the Chola country.

The author of a Tamil commentary on grammar, called Yapparungalaviruttiyurai has quoted some stanzas which might have been in existence even before has period, stating Accyutan had complete control over the entire Tamil country and that he had the fish, bow and tiger as his royal emblem.[18] There is also a legend that Accyutan subdued all the three kings of Tamilaham and put them in prison by tying their legs with chain. To untie the chain each king sang a song praising the valour of Accyutan and requesting him to free him. Three songs of that nature are quoted in "Yapparungalavirutti".[19] In one of these songs Accyutan is mentioned as 'Tillai Accyutan, i.e. Accyutan of Chidambaram thereby suggesting that he may have ruled from Chidambaram.

There was another Accyuta Kalappalan of Chidambaram in the 12th century A.D. He was the father of Meykandar, the author of a great philosophical work on Saiva Siddhanta called "Sivagnanabodam". There are a few songs which have been quoted in the same work invoking Lord Aruhan and Lord Vishnu for the well being of King Accyutan.

Basing themselves on these stanzas some argue that King Accyuta was a follower of Vaishnavism or Jainism. But he seems to have patronized all religions, because, under his patronage, Buddhism also flourished. It had a number of monasteries in the fertile Tanjore region.

Among the three kings who were eclipsed by bad circumstances, the Pandyas seem to have regained powers in some manner, in the second half of the sixth century A.D. Pandyan Kadungon is eulogised in the Velvikkudi copper plate as having conquered the Kalabhras and brought the Pandya kingdom under his control.[20] In mentioning Kadungon's important victory over the Kalabhras, the Velvikkudi copper-plates state that the Kalabhras defeated countless earlier kings, obviously a number of petty chieftains.[21] It can be presumed that after the defeat inflicted by the Kalabhra king, Acchyutan, the three great kingdoms completely perished and hence the rise of innumerable petty kingdoms.

Kadungon's memorable victory over the Kalabhras is also recalled in the Dalavaipuram copper plates, where the Kalabhras are mentioned as "Kalappalar"[22] The word "Kalappazhar", has clarified the misnomer about Kalappalar since "Kalappalar" may be a corrupted form of "Kalappazhar".

In the sixth century A.D., Kalabhras inroads were resisted not only by the Pandyas but also by the Pallavas. It is believed that it was only due to the pressure exerted by the Pallavas that the Kalabhras moved the south and settled in the Chola and Pandya countries in an earlier stage. Simhavishnu, the father of Mahendravarman I, is said to have conquered the Kalabhras, the Malavas, and the Chola, Pandya, Singala and Kerala rulers according to the Kasakkudi copper-plate.[23] Narasimhavarman I, the illustrious son of Mahendravarman is also stated to have often defeated the Chola, Kerala, Kalabhra and Pandya kings.[24] It can be easily surmised from all these that the Kalabhras were continuous trouble makers and had to have been quelled frequently. Even then they were not suppressed completely. During the reign of Narasimhavarman II i.e. Rajasimha also they were to be subdued.[25] Because of this Rajasimha seems to have assumed honourifics like "Kalakalan" and "Kalavikraman".

Even the later Pallavas were not free of Kalabhra's inroads. Nandivarman Pallavamalla, who ruled in the eighth century, in his Pattattalmangalam copper plate, boasts of having conquered the Kalabhras. The copper plate describes this event in enchanting language. "Vallabar, Kalabhras, Keralas, Pandyas, Cholas, Tuluvas, Kongar and some other kings were at the entrance of the palace of Nandhivarman waiting for their turn to prostorate themselves at the foot of the king."[26]

Therefore it is a fact that the Kalabhras persisted even in the eighth century, ruling atleast a small part of the Tamil country. Though they were not strong enough to oppose Nandivarman, they were not in negligible position. That was the same condition in Aparajita's period also. In the Velanjeri copper plate recently discovered by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology, Aparajita is described as a sun wandering over the sky of the Kalabhra dynasty.[27] This statement may mean either that Aparajita was in good relation with the Kalabhras or that he was their powerful enemy. However it is evident that the Kalabhra dynasty existed even in the ninth century.

Chalukyan rulers who were ruling in the seventh and eighth centuries are also said to have conquered the Kalabhras along with the Cholas, Keralas, Pandyas and Pallavas. Vikramaditya-I, who is said to have defeated three Pallava kings, Narasimhavarman-I, Mahendravarman-II, and Paramesvaravarman-I, is referred to in the copper plates of his successors as having subdued the Chola, Pandya, Kerala and Kalabhra kings.[28] Vinayadityan, the son of Vikramaditya-I, claims to have conquered the Kalabhras along with the Pallavas, Keralas, Kaiheyars, Vilar, Malavar, Cholas and Pandyas.[29] Vikramaditya-II, who came to Kanchi to inflict a crushing defeat on Nandivarman Pallavamalla, is also mentioned to have defeated the Pandyas, Cholas, Keralas and Kalabhras.[30]

The illustrious Muttaraiyar King, Swaran Maran who was ruling in the ninth century in the Chola country assumed a number of epithets. One is Kalvarkalvan. This has been interpreted in two ways, one group of scholars as 'the leader of Kalabhras' thereby suggesting that Swaran Maran was the leader of the Kalabhras. They even suggest that the Muttaraiyars and Kalabhras are the same.[31]

Another interpretation is that he is 'Kalvar for Kalvas' i.e. he is an arch rival of the Kalvar-Kalabhras.[32] According to this interpretation the Muttaraiyars were quit against the Kalabhras. This interpretation seems to be more plausible since no Muttaraiyar king is ever called as Kali Arasan or Kalappalar or Kalappalarayar and they were always cordial towards the Pallavas from the period of Narasimha-I to Dantivarman. Similarly the Kalabhras were not called as Muttaraiyar nor had they any title like Perathiaraiyar or Ilavaraiyar as assumed by the Muttaraiyar Kings. The Kalabhras seem to have been permanent trouble makers to the sovereign rule of Pallavas from Simhavishnu to Aparajita.

Recently the Chief Epigraphist's Office in Mysore has published some inscriptions copied from the Coimbatore District. One from Ponnivadi assumes much importance since it mentions a Kalabhra king by name for the first time.[33] His name is found as Kokkandan Ravi.

The prefix before his name is interesting since it solves many problems. "Kalinrpa Kalvan" is the prefix to his name Kokkandan Ravi. This prefix immediately recalls the word recorded to denote the Kalabhras in the Velvikkudi copper plates. In that record the Kalabhras are mentioned as "Kalabhras alias Kali Arasan" Kalinrpa is the sanskritised form of Kaliarasan and the word Kalabhra is the equivalent to Kalvan. Therefore, for the first time, we come across a Kalabhra king by name as Kokkandan Ravi. He is mentioned in the same epigraph to have belonged to the Chandraditya Kula. His personal name and his dynastic name help us to add a few more kings in the list of Kalabhras.

From other epigraphical sources it is found that there were the following kings; Kokkandan Viranarayanan,[34] Ravikandan,[35] Ravi Kodai[36] and Varaguna Parantakan ruling the Kongu country in the tenth century. Considering the affinity of the names one is led to surmise that Kokkandan Viranarayanan and Kokkandan Ravi may have been brothers and one Kandan may have been their father. Similarly Ravikandan and Ravi Kodai may have been sons of Kokkandan Ravi. Varaguna Parantakan is also said in the Piramiyam inscription to have belonged to the Chandraditya Kula.[37] Therefore he must also be one of the Kalabhra kings. On palaeographical ground this Piramiyam inscription is assignable to the tenth century.

Considering the fact that both Kokkandan Viranarayanan and Kokkandan Ravi had "Kokkandan" as the prefix before their names, it is possible that Kokkandan was their father. The Chola king, Aditya seems to have assumed an honorific 'Palyanaik Kokkandan' according to his Tirneythanam inscription.[38] This makes one surmise that he may have had this title after having defeated a King by name Kokkandan. This Kokkandan may be the same father of Kokkandan Viranarayana and Kokkandan Ravi. Aditya's date is fixed as 870 A.D. to 907 A.D. Since he had defeated Kokkandan the latter must have ruled the Kongu country in the last quarter of the ninth century.

From the above analysis the following genealogical table may be prepared.

**Kandan**

**Kandan Viranarayanan** — **Kandan Ravi**

(sons of Kandan Ravi:) **Ravi Kandan** — **Ravi Kodai**

(son of Ravi Kodai:) **Varaguna Parantakan**

The inscriptions of the above kings have been found at Ponnivadi, Palani, Erode and Brahmadesam in Periyar District and at Vellalur, Kiranur, Perur and Piramiyam in Coimbatore District. This shows that those kings had ruled a considerable part of the Kongu country.

There were two Kongu kings by name Virachola Kalimurkkan and Kalimurkka Vikramacholan ruling over the Kongu country in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In a recent work they are identified with Muttaraiyar and are said to have conquered the Kalabhras.[39] The word 'Kalimurkka' which forms a part of their names is interpreted to mean a "rogue to Kali", taking Kali to represent Kalabhras. Either the father or the grandfather of Virachola Kalimurkkan must have assumed the title 'Kalimurkkan' after having suppressed the Kalabhras. Therefore it is evident that the Kalabhras were in the Kongu country even during the later part of the tenth century.

There are a number of epigraphical references to the Kalabhras even in later centuries upto the sixteenth. During these later periods they were not in a monarchical position, but in a subordinate and scattered situation. They were reduced to the position of feudatory[40] or administrative officers[41] or village heads[42] under the Cholas and Pandyas.

The Saiva saint Kurruva Nayanar is said to have belonged the Kalabhra dynasty. "Tiruthondattogai", a Tamil Saiva work, states that Kuruvan as the ruler of Kalandai. Umapathi Sivacharyar of Korravankudi, in his "Tiruttondar Puranappayan", also confirms the statement. He specifically mentions him as 'Kalandai Vendan' (the King of Kalandai). It is also said that a king from Karnataka conquered the Pandya country and tortured a Saiva saint, Murthi Nayanar for his pious activities. This Karnataka king is referred to in a Tamil work, "Kalladam", as a patron of Jainism. As he came from Karnataka and was a patron of Jainism, he is believed to have been a Kalabhra king.

Similarly the Vaishnava saint Tirumangai Alvar is also believed to be a Kalabhra since he had an honorific 'Parakalan' and is referred to have belonged to the Saraba kulam. Saraba kulam is considered to be the same as Kalvarkulam.[43]

The majority of population living in Tanjore and Trichy Districts belong to Kallar community. These Kallars may be the offshoots of the famous Kalabhras. Those who were occupying the martial and

administatiive posts under the great Cholas and later Pandyas may have become, in course of time, as cultivators. Most of these people now do cultivation as their main occupation. Still their suffixes such as Solahar. Thondaiman, etc. in their names clearly reveal their superior position during the time of Medieval Chola and later Pandya. During 17th and 18th centuries one Thondaiman dynasty was ruling the Pudukkottai region. They claim to have belonged to the Kallar community.

As regards the religion of the Kalabhras a long debate is still going on. While some scholars believe that they were the staunch followers of Jainism.[44] others say that they were anti-Brahmanical in activities.[45] Mayilai Seeni Venkatasamy has written in his recent book that it is not easily possible to judge their religion.[46] Because Acchyuta Vikkanta appears to have followed Buddhism. But at the same time there are some poems which invokes God Aruhan and Lord Vishnu for Acchuta's well being. Kurruva Nayanar who is stated to have belonged to the Kalabhra dynasty was a staunch saivite.

Kalabhra kings like Kokkandan Ravi and his successors seem to have extended their patronage to Saivism. During their period it is found in inscriptions that gifts were endowed for the performance of Pujas and for the construction of mantapas in Siva temples.[47]

Therefore one can cautiously putforth the view that the Kalabhras of earlier period gave support either for Jainism or Buddhism, but of latter patronised Saivism.

A coin of Kalabhra is said to have been discovered bearing Chaitya and tree in railing on the obverse and a legend 'Kalabhra' written in reverse.[48] The authenticity of it could not be judged without seeing its original. Dr. R. Nagaswamy has recently identified one coin to Kalabhras on the basis of the legend found on its reverse.[49] The legend is read as "Kandarangusasya" taking to mean that "Kandar who was an ankusa". This legend is interpretable in another way also taking "An ankusa to Kandar".

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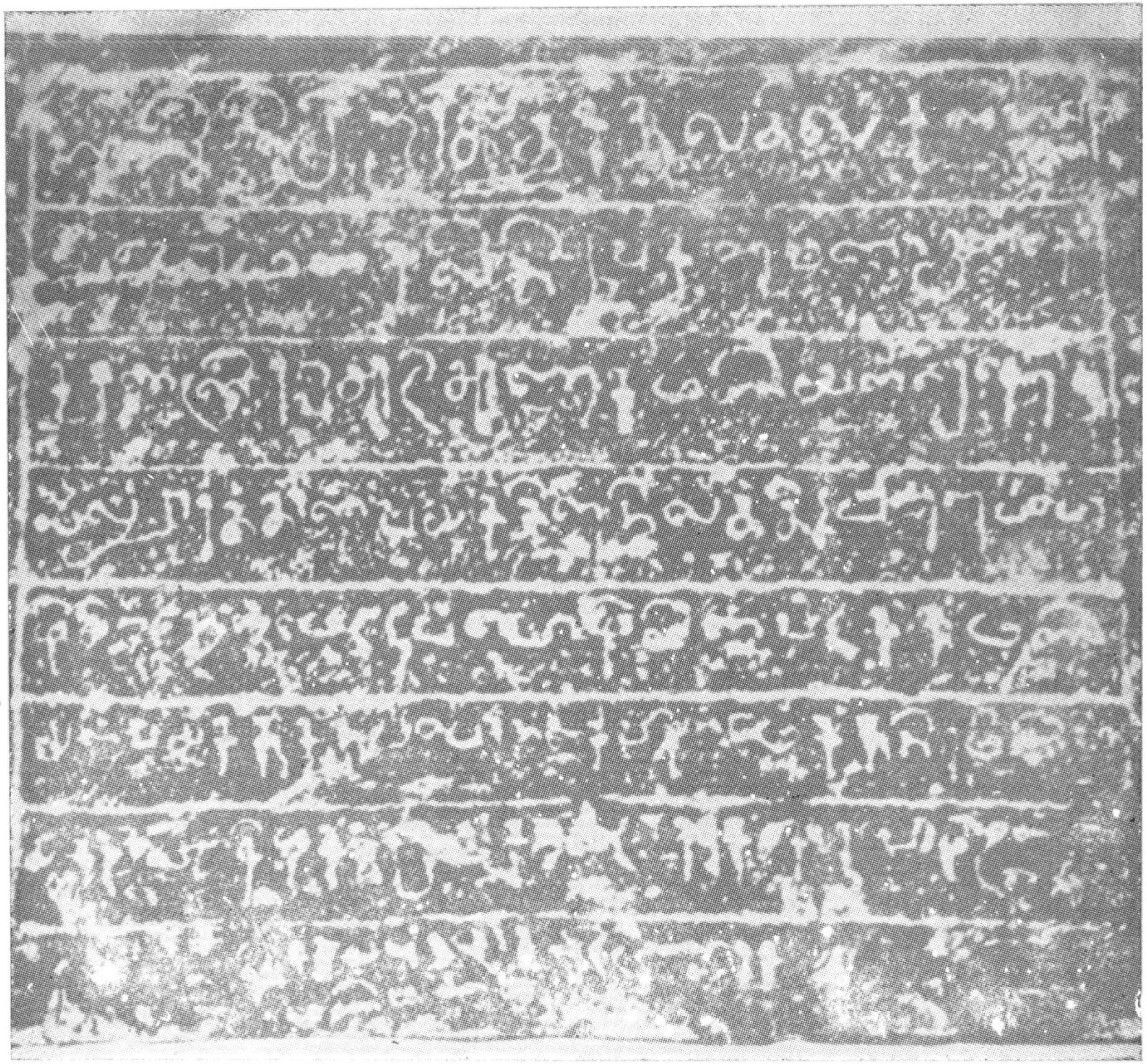

Tamil Inscription of Kokkadan Ravi, Kalabra king, 9th century A.D., Ponnivadi, Coimbatore District.

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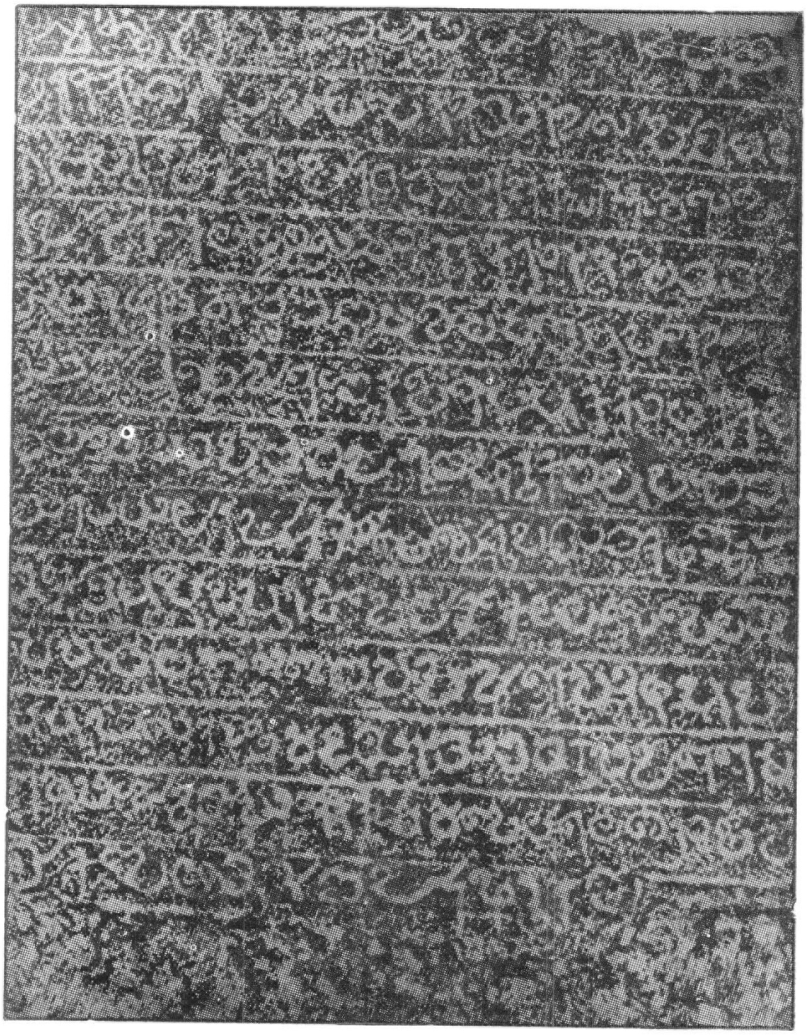
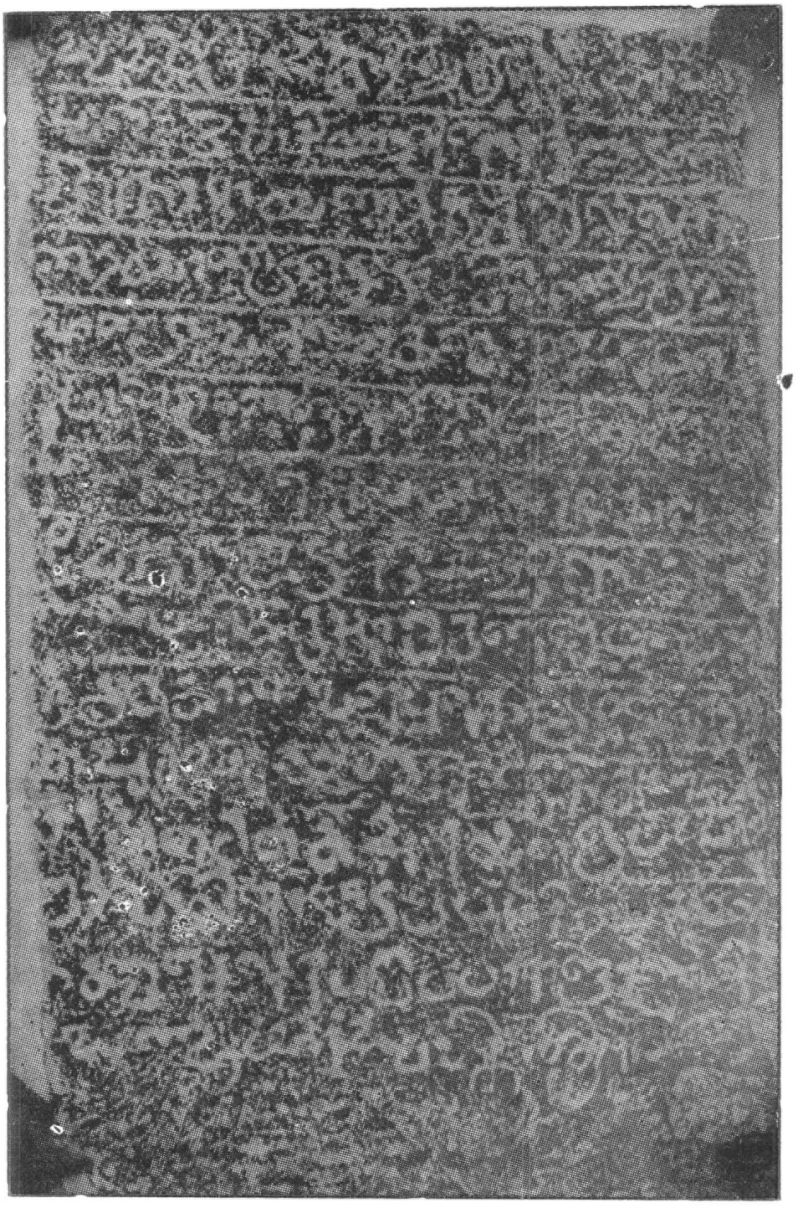


Tamil Inscription of Kandan Vira Narayanan, Kalabra king, 9th century A.D. Vellalur, Coimbatore District.



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19. Ibid
20. Pandiyar Seppedukal Pattu (Tamil) *Velvikkudi Seppedu*, 1139 – 46.
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